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AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF Sister Mary Peter Kump, S.S.M.O. for the
Master of Arts in History presented February 14, 1975.

Title: Truman's Election in 1948

APPROVED BY MEMBERS OF THE THESIS COMMITTEE:


Jesse L. Gilmore, Chairman


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You can't judge a book by its cover. The cliché may be trite, nonetheless it is applicable to Harry S. Truman. The feisty Missourian wrested greatness from the hands of his challengers who would have denied it to him because of his background. His lack of a college degree seemed to rankle the press, and as far as they were concerned disqualified him as President of the United States.

Based largely on contemporary accounts, this thesis traces the color and drama of Truman's 1948 campaign. In order to appreciate fully the triumph of the President's victory, it was necessary to follow his career

from the time of his unexpected ascendancy to the highest office in the land to his ultimate triumph in 1948. The developments on the international and domestic scene, fraught with danger and anxiety for the American public, provided the backdrop which enabled Truman to prove his resourcefulness and courage.

This thesis does not pretend to solve the mystery of the 1948 election. Rather it has proven to be an exercise in research instead of a revealing analysis of the presidential campaign. No new material has been made available to the public which would help answer the question of why the press was so consistently wrong in its analysis of the outcome. Nor has the press admitted to an unreasonably biased view of Harry Truman. They maligned him unmercifully, still he prevailed. He was indeed the "uncommonest of common men."

TRUMAN'S ELECTION IN 1948

by

SISTER MARY PETER KUMP, S.S.M.O.


A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS
in
HISTORY

Portland State University
1975

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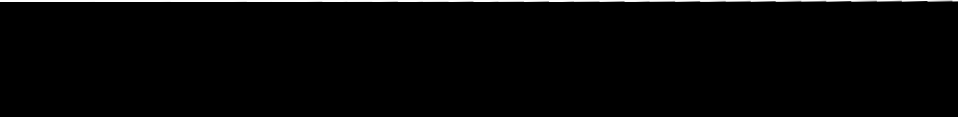
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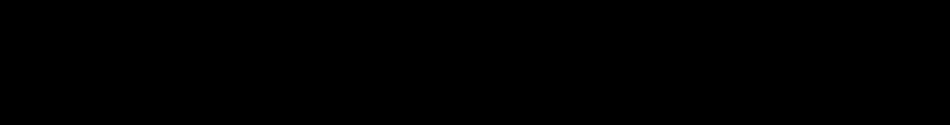

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Harry S. Truman was a man who never failed to acknowledge the assistance he had received from others. I cannot do less. Therefore, I would like to thank my community, the Sisters of Saint Mary of Oregon, for giving me the opportunity to write this thesis. And most especially, to thank my dearest friends, Sister Mary Roberta Kunz and Sister Margaret Rose Scholze, who encouraged and assisted me throughout the project.

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CHAPTER I

MAELSTROM OF DOUBT

"Mr. President, we are ready to eat crow whenever you are ready to serve it."¹ Thus blazed the sign on the front of the Washington Post Building as the President rode triumphantly up Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington, D.C. He had won the election of 1948 in spite of all the dire predictions of the political pundits. If Truman harbored any grudge against the fourth estate he stifled all semblance of gloating. Instead, he sent a message to the Washington Post saying, "I did not want anyone to eat crow...I said I felt the tremendous responsibility that was mine for the next four years, and that I hoped for the support of all the people in carrying out the program which I thought they had entrusted me to accomplish."² And so it was that Truman embarked upon the roller-coaster of political life, for the last time, in the capacity of President of the United States. A role he was already familiar with since he had served three years and six months. Only this time he came in by the front door, not the back door of the White House.

But who was this man that so baffled the nation by his "miraculous" victory? Was he the "ordinary," "simple" man so often depicted by the press? Dean Acheson didn't seem to think so judging from his comments

¹Harry S. Truman, Memoirs (New York: Doubleday and Company, 1956), II, 222.

²Ibid.

to Merle Miller. Quote Mr. Acheson:

I have never understood why the press did such an abysmally poor job in writing about the President...It's as if the correspondents had made up their minds when Truman became President that he was a country bumpkin, and I am afraid a great many of them never changed their minds.

I have read over and over again that he was an ordinary man. Whatever that means...I consider him one of the most extraordinary human beings who ever lived.³

Perhaps Mr. Miller himself explained the negative reaction of the press most succinctly when he said, "I had never quite forgiven him [Truman] for not being Franklin Roosevelt, for being plain instead of patrician."⁴

Unfortunately, this image of the Missouri farmer ascending to the presidency cast a pall of doubt and fear over his administration. Events were transpiring so rapidly in both foreign and domestic matters that the populace trembled lest Harry couldn't cope with the burden. Needless to say, the Republicans capitalized on this image and unrelentingly added to the picture of inadequacy and gaucherie. Only a man of stature and possessing a sureness born of maturity could have withstood the barrage of epithets hurled in his direction.

However, Truman himself became vexed by the speculations and inaccuracies concerning his life. "Stories were being written about my early life, associations, and education, intended, perhaps, to shed some light on the reasons for my actions and what course I would be likely to take," said Harry Truman in his Memoirs. "These speculations about what I would do led to many baseless conclusions. Far too often they grew out

³Merle Miller, Plain Speaking (New York: Berkeley Publishing Corporation, 1973), p. 376.

⁴Ibid., p. 21.

of inaccuracies and even untruths about my life."⁵ Consequently, to dispel any further guesswork about his background he proceeded in a matter-of-fact style to write of his early development as a man and a politician. What emerges is a man of complex dimensions, with a tenacity that knows no equal. He was indeed an extraordinary man and one well-suited to wrest the political plum of 1948 from Thomas E. Dewey.

Harry Truman's childhood was markedly stable. "The dominant theme in...family memories is not woe but a wonderfully solid happiness rooted in the peaceful rhythms of a slower, more deliberate time."⁶ He was always aware of the supportive love and influence of his parents, and in spite of a slight handicap of bad eyesight--presumably the most traumatic event in his developmental years--he studied, played, and thoroughly enjoyed life. His father* lost his money speculating on the grain market in 1901 thus eliminating any chance for Harry to go to college. It is at this juncture that we see one of the outstanding qualities of Truman's personality. He never looked back, and apparently never bemoaned his lot in life but rather went forward with resolution. He was a timekeeper, bank clerk, farmer, artillery captain, haberdasher, judge, senator and vice-president before he became President of the United States.

"Associations" connoted for Truman a happy roster of people who colored his life: relatives, high school friends, wartime buddies and political companions. For the press, the word "associations" generally

⁵Truman, Memoirs, I, 12.

⁶Margaret Truman, Harry S. Truman (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1973), p. 45.

*It is amusing to note that John Anderson Truman's occupation is listed as "farmer and livestock trader," or "farmer and mule trader," depending on the political affiliations of the various writers.

meant one thing, Pendergast, the boss of Kansas City and Jackson County. Truman had received the backing of the Pendergast machine when he ran for judge and later as senator. This association, which was mutually beneficial, was to plague Truman for years. In Washington, D.C., the epithet "the senator from Pendergast" was the derisive appellation unjustly given Truman. Not until Harry Truman won the re-election to the senate in 1940, while Pendergast was in jail, did he emerge as his own man.⁷ Upon his return to Washington, D.C. he was given a standing ovation as he entered the senate chamber.⁸

Harry Truman is the only president in the twentieth century who has never attended college.* After graduating from Independence High School he was forced, by necessity, to seek employment in order to help his family. This may explain Truman's tremendous program of self-education which was manifested by an astonishing knowledge in a broad field of interests; e.g. architecture, music, art and history--the latter being a special interest to him. The lack of a college degree might also account for a part of the incredible bias of the press.

⁷Cabell Phillips, The Truman Presidency (New York: Doubleday and Company, 1951), ch. 2; and Irwin Ross, The Loneliest Campaign (New York: New American Library, 1968), ch. 2.

⁸Margaret Truman, p. 136.

*George Washington, Andrew Jackson, Martin VanBuren, Zachary Taylor, Millard Fillmore, Abraham Lincoln, Andrew Johnson, Grover Cleveland, and Harry S. Truman are the only presidents who did not attend college. However, Andrew Jackson, Martin VanBuren, Millard Fillmore, Abraham Lincoln and Grover Cleveland all studied law in an office and were admitted to the bar. Out of this group only George Washington, Zachary Taylor, Andrew Johnson and Harry S. Truman failed to get a law degree. Of these nine presidents listed, five are ranked as "great" or "near great": they are 1) Abraham Lincoln, 2) George Washington, 3) Andrew Jackson, 4) Grover Cleveland, and 5) Harry S. Truman. (Phillips, pp. 397-98.)

There is a lesson to be learned from Tevye in "Fiddler on the Roof." When he sang, "If I were a rich man...the most important men...will ask me to advise them, like Solomon the wise...it won't make one bit of difference if I answer right or wrong...when you're rich, they think you really know,"⁹ the audience chuckled with embarrassed delight. Truman was much like Tevye. He was not rich and he did not have the educational background of his aristocratic predecessor. In short, he had little to commend himself to a nation that placed great emphasis on externals. Perhaps that is why Truman almost wistfully declared, "When you get an education, that is something nobody can take from you--money is only temporary--but what you have in your head, if you have the right kind of a head, stays with you."¹⁰ Truman surely must have recognized his ideas would be more acceptable to Congress if he could have flourished a "Ha'vad" degree.

The dialogue which took place between Eleanor Roosevelt and Harry S. Truman when he was called to the White House and informed of F.D.R.'s death foretold his plight in simple terms. With masterful control Mrs. Roosevelt said:

"Harry, the President is dead."

After an agonizing interval Truman replied, "Is there anything I can do for you?"

And again, Eleanor Roosevelt with a calm dignity answered, "Is there

⁹"If I Were a Rich Man." Lyrics by Sheldon Harnick. Music by Jerry Bock.

¹⁰William Hillman, Mr. President (New York: Farrar, Straus and Young, 1952), p. 219.

anything we can do for you? For you are the one in trouble now."¹¹

And indeed he was the one in trouble. Never had a President been catapulted into such a critical period of history. The difficulties with which Harry Truman was beset cannot be overestimated. "...Mr. Truman had to be both a war President and a postwar or reconstruction President, and he had to accomplish the transition with hardly more forewarning than had preceded his sudden induction into the presidency itself."¹²

Added to these problems was the handicap of following in the steps of F.D.R. The prestige and adulation which Roosevelt enjoyed died along with the man from Hyde Park. "When...Harry Truman took his place, it was as if the star of the show had left and his role had been taken by a spear carrier from the mob scene. Nobody had the heart to criticize his early performance."¹³

On April 17, 1945, only five days after taking office, Truman held his first press conference. Apparently it drew a record attendance of 348 correspondents which, according to James E. Pollard, gave ample evidence of Truman's popularity. In fact, Pollard contends, "In Mr. Truman's first year and a half in the White House, the press on the whole treated him rather well."¹⁴ Though the last statement is highly debatable, Truman's

¹¹Truman, Memoirs, II, 5.

¹²Louis Koenig (ed.), The Truman Administration: Its Principles and Practices (New York: New York University Press, 1956.), p. 1.

¹³Robert S. Allen and William V. Shannon, The Truman Merry-Go-Round (New York: Vanguard Press, 1950), p. 3.

¹⁴The Presidents and the Press (Washington, D.C.: Public Affairs Press, 1966, p. 28.

popularity in the first few months in office was an established fact. The Gallup poll indicated that in July, 1945, his popularity stood at 87 per cent.¹⁵ The future boded well for the man from Independence.

World War II was still raging, though the long sought victory seemed near, and no one wanted to jeopardize its successful conclusion. The fervor of patriotism was high and anyone who failed to back the President was anathema. In May, 1942, Thomas E. Dewey delivered a speech in which were stated the principles by which most Americans functioned during the war. Politicians were cautious with their opponents. Here is a sample of wartime rhetoric:

Somehow, with the tragedy of war, there are many compensations to sustain us. The most important of these is this greater unity among us all--a unity fused by the white heat of patriotism. Only a complete singleness of purpose will sustain us. Past differences must be forgotten. Political passions must be rationed. Personal interest must be subordinated to the common welfare. The American people will not stand for the feuds and bickering that attended the downfall of France.

The President of the United States is our elected leader in this fateful war. We shall all support his every effort to win the war. We shall even support him in spite of mistakes provided they are solely the result of zeal to win the war.¹⁶

But with the coming of peace, the honeymoon ended. The "white heat of patriotism" burned itself out and the fraternal charity expressed by political parties vanished. Shortly after the cessation of the war, forces began to militate against Truman's popularity.

Pandora's box opened as World War II closed. The American public

¹⁵Roy V. Peel, "The 1948 Pre-Convention," Annals of the American Academy, September, 1948, p. 87.

¹⁶Stanley Walker, Dewey, an American of This Century (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1944), p. 258.

was really beginning to think equality meant just that, equality. No longer were the minority groups willing to let the white, Protestant stock rule the nation. Blacks, Jews, Catholics had prospered during the war and had broken a chink in the armor of bigotry and prejudice. Though the break-through was small it nevertheless turned the old social structure topsy-turvy. Jackie Robinson hurled invectives back at the whites who taunted him thus creating a watershed for the American negro. As one newspaperman said about the incident: "By God, there's a black boy squawking just like everybody else and nothing happening. I don't mean to be silly but somehow I think this is one for the history books."¹⁷ Jackie Robinson may have been one of the most famous blacks to rebel but he most assuredly was not the first. An article which appeared in Phylon in 1944 indicated the growing impatience and belligerence of the blacks. It said, "When we get to the front the first thing we'll do is to shoot our white officers; then we'll start shooting Japs and Nazis...the next war is going to be in Mississippi."¹⁸ It was becoming hard for politicians to ignore the race issue.

Though the blacks were the most vocal minority group, all lower status groups were seeking greener pastures. Veterans used the G.I. Bill of Rights to advance themselves in business and education. Many who had thought of college as the "preserve of the rich" found themselves rubbing elbows with the best.¹⁹ The mystique was gone. People had money and a

¹⁷Eric Goldman, The Crucial Decade (New York: Random House, 1960), p. 52.

¹⁸H.C. Brearley, "The Negro's New Belligerency," Phylon V (Winter, 1944), p.339-45.

¹⁹Goldman, p. 12-13.

new status. Change was in the offing and restless, eager crowds were ready to grab the golden ring. Hard work, energy and know-how took precedence over social status. The Walls of Jericho were tumbling down.

Equality was not the only thing people longed for. After four years of wartime restrictions Americans hungered for luxury items. "Women had trouble getting furniture, nylons, a new electric iron; men found clothing, even a razor blade that would shave clean, in short supply; families were forced on to hopeless-appearing waiting lists for a new car."²⁰

Housing, food, wage and price controls all clamored for the government's attention. "Scarcities plus price controls had held a lid on living costs, with the result that at war's end there was an unheard-of nest egg of \$136.4 billion of personal savings in banks and government bonds itching to be spent.

"And therein lay the hot fuse of a disastrous inflation...Abundant dollars chasing scarce commodities equals spiraling prices; ergo, boom and bust."²¹

The reckless, exuberant forces unleashed by the termination of war cared little for the problems confronting the President. "Normalcy" was demanded NOW and woe unto the politician who couldn't deliver. The Republicans recognized Truman's tenuous position and capitalized on the reversion problems for the gain of their party.

Joe Martin, Minority Leader and Republican Speaker of the House, admitted the problems Truman encountered were a direct result of the up-

²⁰Goldman, p. 26.

²¹Phillips, pp. 102-3.

heaval of World War II. Said Martin, "No political system could have remained insulated against such shocks." Nevertheless, he and a host of stalwart Republicans set out deliberately to jettison the Democratic program for reconversion. In somewhat sanctimonious terms Joe Martin boasted of his opposition to Truman. "...as Speaker of the Eightieth Congress in 1947-48, I led the Republicans in what looks in retrospect like the last stand against heavy federal spending, high taxes, centralization, and extravagance." He went on to say that the opposition the GOP was able to muster had been the most formidable ever allied against the New Deal. "In the Senate, Bob Taft was in his prime, a deadly critic of Truman's policies. Southern Democrats were again stout allies. And once again the Republicans were fired up in the illusion that after four successive defeats we would recapture the White House at last in 1948."²²

Low-cost housing was becoming a major problem before America's entry into World War II, and by the time the veterans began to return home the shortage had reached epidemic proportions. "Throughout the nation, many veterans and their families lived in attics, basements, chicken coops, and boxcars. Washington, D.C., for example, reported 25,000 homeless veterans; Chicago had four times that number, while relatively small Jefferson City, Missouri, needed 500 homes for returned servicemen. In Atlanta, 2,000 persons answered one advertisement of a vacancy, and a want ad in an Omaha newspaper read, 'Big Ice Box, 7 by 17 feet. Could be fixed up to live in.'"²³

²²Joe Martin, My First Fifty Years in Politics (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1960), pp. 176-79.

²³Richard O. Davies, Housing Reform during the Truman Administration (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1966), p. 41.

The comments were clever, bitter and desperate, but one thing was clear, the necessity for governmental action. Though Truman had inherited this burden from the Roosevelt administration and wrestled with it for the almost eight years of his presidency, he was never able to solve the problem.

It was not political expediency alone which motivated Truman in supporting housing reform; he seemed genuinely concerned for the people. In his Message on Reconversion, which Truman sent to Congress on September 6, 1945, he said, "A decent standard of housing for all is one of the irreducible obligations of modern civilization." Furthermore, he told Congress that his goal could be reached only by "the enactment of a comprehensive housing bill that included public housing, slum clearance, liberal aids to private housing, and the adoption of a national housing policy affirming the government's responsibility in postwar housing."²⁴ Unfortunately, Truman faced the same conservative coalition of Southern Democrats and conservative Republicans that had held Roosevelt in check on many of his proposals. The half-hearted attempt to relieve the housing shortage failed.

Truman's popularity suffered another reversal due to a curious backlash of public opinion connected with the housing problem. On December 3, 1945, the Commission of Fine Arts approved plans for the renovation of the White House. Crews had already begun work when newspapers, architects, and Republicans stormed disapproval. "Builders protested the White House addition at a time when veterans were unable to get housing materials."²⁵

²⁴Davies, p. 32.

²⁵"Repairs at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue," Newsweek, February 11, 1946, p. 25.

The result was that on January 24 the House voted, 110-41, to an amendment to the appropriations bill which would recall the funds voted in December for White House improvements.

Life magazine took a more balanced view of the situation. Recognizing the state of deterioration, there appeared an article in Life which said, "Whether President Truman presses the issue will not make much difference. The old White House has a way of catching up occasionally with the times. And it has been a long time since January 1, 1903, when Teddy Roosevelt held the reception formally opening the 'new' White House."²⁶ The passage of time certainly was to prove the validity of this statement. In 1948 Truman and his family were forced to move into Blair House because the White House was literally falling down.*

Before the November election, a wave of strikes shut down one industry after another, just as Truman had predicted. Auto workers, steel workers, packinghouse workers, electrical workers and communication workers had all revolted. (Most of these strikes were settled quickly with an 18.5 cent wage increase.) However, it was the threatened walkout of the soft coal miners and the rail strike which created the biggest headache for Truman.

Labor Secretary Lewis B. Schwellenback, an old senate crony of Tru-

²⁶"The White House," Life, October 4, 1946, p. 61.

*In 1947 a chandelier nearly fell during an official reception. By 1948 the foundation was sinking in the swampy ground beneath it. There was no visible support for the ceiling in the Green Room but a few rusty nails. And a spinet broke through Margaret Truman's sitting room, (a long thick piece of wood from the White House beam is on display in Truman's library in Independence, Missouri). Only the walls were safe. (Margaret Truman, Harry S. Truman, pp. 398-99, and "Ramble in the Past with Mr. Truman," Life, April 24, 1964, p. 29.)

man's, was chosen as mediator at the bargaining table, but when he failed to negotiate satisfactorily, John R. Steelman* was called in to help. When all compromises were rejected by the unions Truman himself took over. In his Memoirs Truman stated that the strike "was no contest between labor and management but one between a small group of men and their government."²⁷ Consequently, Truman appeared before a joint session of Congress and requested emergency legislation to draft strikers. But even while Truman was talking, Leslie Biffle, Secretary of the Senate, handed Truman a note announcing settlement of the railroad strike.

Shortly thereafter, Congress passed the Case bill to regulate labor unions. Truman vetoed it on the grounds that its way of controlling strikes was basically antilabor and would produce more conflict. Though his veto was sustained, the issue of federal controls to curb union power did not die.

Along with the rash of strikes which confronted the President, was added the burden of increased tensions between the Soviet Union and the United States. "The get tough policy," which Henry Wallace warned, "would only produce a get tougher policy" with Russia, drove the Secretary of Commerce from the Democratic ranks into the waiting arms of the Progressives.²⁸ The formation of Wallace's third party created another hiatus in an already rupturing Democratic party. In 1946 it was difficult to

*In The Truman Merry-Go-Round Steelman is described as an apple-polisher, a bombastic hack, an anti-labor labor expert, and a congenital glad-hander who was all things to all men. He was big, 215 pounds of hulking humanity. He was not sports-minded, not was he well read. In fact, according to Allen, Steelman had only one unswerving interest, he always listened to Amos 'n Andy on the radio.

²⁷Truman, Memoirs, I, 501.

²⁸Henry Wallace, "My Commitments," Vital Speeches, August 1, 1948, p. 620.

determine how many votes this split would cost Truman. Senator Scott Lucas, an Illinois Democrat said, "He [Wallace] won't get enough votes to wad a shotgun."²⁹ However, Marquis Childs said that Wallace might draw a vote of ten million, while Jim Farley estimated a vote of six million for him.³⁰ Only the final tally in November, 1948, would prove which analysis was correct.

The landslide victory of the Republicans in the 1946 congressional elections, attested dramatically to the dissatisfaction of the American public. In fact, "So overwhelming was this Republican trend that voters in Atlantic City, New Jersey, elected a Republican as justice of the peace who had died a week before election day."³¹ It was ironic, however, that the housing problem was one of the issues which caused an impatient public to vote in a predominantly Republican Congress. Truman, who had consistently fought for public housing had been repudiated by the American people who elected men adamantly opposed to federal assistance. The ultra-conservative faction of Congress viewed housing legislation as socialistic experimentation. Susan M. Hartmann does not agree with this interpretation, however. She contends that the election returns were not a repudiation of the New Deal. "...the vote reflected primarily the frustrations and stresses that accompanied adjustment to a peacetime economy. Pre-election polls had shown little opposition to the prewar social and economic programs; the public was most concerned about inflation, short-

²⁹Jules Abels, Out of the Jaws of Victory (New York: Henry Holt, 1959), p. 21.

³⁰Ibid., p. 22.

³¹R. Alton Lee, Truman and Taft-Hartley (Lexington: University of Kentucky, 1966), p. 48.

ages of food and other commodities, remaining wartime controls, and strikes and other labor problems."³² Whatever the motivating forces were which ushered in the Eightieth Congress, one result stands out clearly. The Republicans, after sixteen years of playing second fiddle, were glowing in the warmth of the spotlight and manipulating Democratic reversals for their own benefit. A campaign of disparagement was set in motion with slogans such as "Had Enough?", "To Err is Truman," and "Under Truman: Two Families in Every Garage."³³*

Senator Fulbright of Arkansas was so demoralized by the Republican coup that he suggested Truman resign. As if this proposal was not enough, he went on to say that Senator Arthur Vandenberg should take his place.³⁴ Ludicrous as this idea may seem in 1974, it was a clear indicator of Truman's popularity in 1946. Apparently, no suggestion was too absurd in order to get rid of the man in the White House.

³²Susan M. Hartmann, Truman and the 80th Congress (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1971), p. 8.

³³Ibid., pp. 8-9.

*According to Davies, the slogan "Two Families in Every Garage" was actually said by Truman about Taft during a speech at Wilmington, Delaware on October 29, 1948. (Housing Reform, p. 97.)

³⁴Ross, pp. 9-10.

CHAPTER II

HARBINGER OF HOPE

"Until after the 1946 elections, President Truman had taken no significant step to improve his party's position or to ensure his selection as Democratic standard-bearer in 1948."¹ Though most Americans considered Truman a "first-rate second-rate man," the truth revealing Gallup poll indicated that his initial popularity of 87 percent had dropped continually from 1945 through 1946. "A series of strikes brought it [Truman's] popularity down to 63 percent in February, 1946; price rises thrust it down to 50 percent in April, 1946. From then till October there were more strikes and a meat shortage--he then hit bottom at 32 percent."²

"Within the first months I discovered that being President is like riding a tiger. A man has to keep on riding or be swallowed."³ Truman's actions from January, 1947 on, bear out the obvious fact that Truman had no intention of copying Jonah's antics with the whale. It was the top-side not the inside of the tiger Truman was interested in. With the aid of Clark Clifford, the President set out to renew his lease on the White House in 1948. The elections of 1946, instead of crushing Truman's hopes,

¹Roy V. Peel, "The 1948 Preconvention Campaign," Annals of the American Academy, September, 1948, p. 85.

²Ibid., p. 87.

³Harry S. Truman, Memoirs (New York: Doubleday and Company, 1956) II, 1.

goaded him on to greater efforts. He "felt freer to be himself, to act on his own in his own ways."⁴ As Truman himself quipped, "When you're at the bottom you've got no place to go but up."⁵

On November 21, in defiance of a court injunction, John L. Lewis led the coal miners out on strike. The subsequent stand which Truman took, broke the deadlock and achieved for the President the first real victory he had had in the domestic field. Though his stock in trade had gone up slightly, Truman nevertheless faced a long and exhausting struggle before he was accepted in his own right.

Since the Eightieth Congress was dominated by Republicans, the responsibility for solving domestic and foreign problems fell largely to them. Truman recognized this when he said, "If the Democrats really go after it, as they should, the Republican responsibility can really be made their responsibility as it should be."⁶ This, then, was going to be the main thrust of the Democratic offensive. The GOP was going to be made to feel the sting of criticism which had till now been mainly devolving around Truman.

During 1947 and 1948 a core group gathered, under the aegis of Clark Clifford, to formulate a positive program of action for the Presidential race in 1948. The nucleus of this group consisted of Oscar R.

⁴Eric Goldman, The Crucial Decade (New York: Random House, 1960), p. 62.

⁵Cabell Phillips, The Truman Presidency (New York: MacMillan Company, 1966), p. 161

⁶Susan M. Hartmann, Truman and the 80th Congress (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1971), p. 18.

Ewing, Director of the Federal Security Agency; Clark Clifford,* Special Counsel to the President; Leon Keyserling, member of the Council of Economic Advisers; C. Girard Davidson, Assistant Secretary of the Interior; David A. Morse, Assistant Secretary of Labor, and Charles S. Murphy, an administrative assistant to the President.⁷ These men, referred to as the "palace guard," were to shape a liberal philosophy both persuasive in doctrine and attainable in reality. Said Clifford, "Our interest was to be exclusively on domestic affairs, not foreign...We wanted to create a set of goals that truly met the deepest and greatest needs of the people, and we wanted to build a liberal, forward-moving program around those goals that could be recognized as a 'Truman' program."⁸

According to Susan Hartmann, one of the first things Truman did to strengthen the administration against attacks from the new majority was to establish the Temporary Commission on Employee Loyalty** on Nov-

*Clark Clifford, a young lawyer from St. Louis, played an enormous role in Truman's administration. He has been described in such glowing terms one wonders whether writers are talking about the Creator or the created. Allen and Shannon, who speak in superlatives, gave the following description of Clifford. "His face was too handsome, his blond hair too evenly waved, his smile too dazzling, his voice too resonant, his manner too patently sincere, his family background, childhood, college record, romantic courtship, and legal career all too storybookish to be real. Somewhere there must be a flaw...But so far Washington hasn't discovered it." And apparently neither had anyone else. (The Truman Merry-Go-Round, p. 58.)

⁷Phillips, p. 162.

⁸Ibid., p. 164.

**Revisionists feel that Truman's establishment of governmental loyalty procedures in 1946 and 1947, satisfied no one. He was condemned by conservative Republicans as being soft on Reds, and antagonized liberals by being too militant.

ember 25, 1946.⁹ An outburst of unreasonable, irrational fear against Communist influence in the United States had gripped the American people. The tensions of the Cold War and the revelation of the Soviet spy rings in Canada in 1946 had created an atmosphere of suspicion which led to a tightening of security.¹⁰

By 1950 "red-baiting" had become a tortured labyrinth of fear, anxiety and panic, culminating in a reactionary desire for investigation. A scapegoat was needed to assuage fear. The scapegoat was Truman, the Democratic party, and any unlikely official who fell under the fanatical eye of Joseph McCarthy. Sad to say, even a man of Taft's stature succumbed to the demagogical ravings of this "star performer." Several reporters* quoted Taft as saying in March, 1950, "at the height of the campaign of Senator Joseph McCarthy alleging a Communist infiltration of the State Department, that McCarthy should 'keep talking and if one case doesn't work out he should proceed with another.'"¹¹ However, prior to the elections of 1948, this issue was not that dominant.

Truman continued his positive course of action when he spelled out in specific terms the legislative program in his State of the Union address on January 6, 1947. Noting that a good many of the members of Congress

⁹Hartmann, p. 20.

¹⁰Barton J. Bernstein and Allen J. Matusow, The Truman Administration (New York: Harper and Row, 1966), p. 357.

*Both William S. White, and Richard Rovere stated McCarthy used questionable tactics to discredit Truman and his administration.

¹¹William S. White, The Taft Story (New York: Harper and Row, 1954), p. 85.

had moved over to the left since he had last spoken there, Truman proceeded to give his report.¹²

He asked for speedy ratification of the peace treaties with Italy, Bulgaria, Rumania and Hungary. He advocated a trade system free from obstructions and stressed the need for legislation as regards displaced persons. International control of atomic energy and the problem of universal military training all received his attention.¹³

In his message Truman reiterated his request for a massive housing program, compulsory health insurance, civil rights, and a national fair employment practices act. He emphasized the importance of a balanced budget and a complete overhaul of existing labor legislation.¹⁴ The recommendations in the passage on Labor and Management were noteworthy because it was in this area that a great deal of controversy was to develop. The President had specifically requested that a commission should study the underlying causes of labor disputes.

In exploring problems involved between labor and management Truman had urged Congress to be circumspect in its methods in dealing with the unions. "We must not... adopt punitive legislation. We must not, in order to punish a few labor leaders, pass vindictive laws which will restrict the proper rights of the rank and file of labor."¹⁵

But from the outset of the Eightieth Congress, interest in a labor

¹²Harry S. Truman, "The State of the Union," Vital Speeches, January 15, 1947, p. 194.

¹³Ibid., pp. 198-99.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 197.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 195.

control bill had been strong. On the first day alone, seventeen labor bills had been dropped in the House hopper.¹⁶ "The anti-labor drive in the states reached its peak in 1947 when, under the lobbying pressure of state and local employer associations and the backing of the NAM and the United States Chamber of Commerce, some thirty states restricted the rights of organized labor."¹⁷ Senator Wayne Morse capsulized the feeling of the nation when he said, "Congress yielded to public heat, not to public reason."¹⁸ Thus it was that the climate for the Taft-Hartley Act was created and the vehicle by which Truman won back the labor vote was set in motion.

"Mr. Republican," Robert A. Taft, was the undisputed leader of the Republican party and the man most responsible for the structure of the Taft-Hartley Act. His counterpart, Fred. A. Hartley, Jr.,* and his volcanic sidekick, Charlie Halleck, who claimed he had a hell of a lot to

¹⁶James T. Patterson, Mr. Republican: A Biography of Robert A. Taft (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1972), p. 253.

¹⁷R. Alton Lee, Truman and Taft-Hartley (Lexington: University of Kentucky, 1966), p. 50.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 51.

*Fred A. Hartley, Jr., who was appointed chairman of the House Committee on Education and Labor, was denounced by Mary Norton of New Jersey. A woman of great personal integrity and an unswerving friend of labor, Mrs. Norton, the ranking Democrat and former chairman of the committee, resigned because "she would not serve under a chairman who did not know his head from a bucket of lard as far as labor problems were concerned." Said Mrs. Norton, "In the ten years I served as chairman, Hartley had attended exactly six meetings and yet talked about labor as if he knew something about it." Hartley did not deny the charge, but simply said she was a bad loser. (Allen and Shannon, The Truman Merry-Go-Round, p. 206; Lee, Truman and Taft-Hartley, p. 55.)

do with drafting the Taft-Hartley bill,¹⁹ worked in unison towards the formation of the measure. The resultant bill, generally viewed as more moderate than the earlier bills introduced, passed both houses by an imposing bipartisan sweep.

William S. White, former reporter and sympathetic biographer of Taft, has given credit to the Republican leader for warding off the liberal faction in the senate, as well as softening the harsh approach that the House had taken in the battle to curb the labor unions. (A dubious honor for pro-labor adherents.) According to White, Taft had reconciled these divergent views, attaining a "just bill, mild in comparison to the punishment which might have been meted out if certain extremists...could write the bill."²⁰ Not everyone felt as White did, however. Senator Harley M. Kilgore, a West Virginian Democrat said, "a twenty-five percent solution of carbolic acid might be considered mild compared to a hundred percent solution."²¹

Even before the passage of the "slave labor law" thousands of workers protested with vigor. Thundered George Meany, "American workers will not cheerfully accept any statute which compels them to work against their will. They will resent and resist such flagrant violation by Congress of the Constitution of the United States--in particular, the Thirteenth Amendment, which forbids involuntary servitude." He went on to say that

¹⁹Henry Z. Scheele, Charlie Halleck (New York: Exposition Press, 1966). p. 115.

²⁰White, p. 73.

²¹Ibid., p. 74.

"Henry Wallace would giggle with glee if the measure were enacted into law."²² However, labor leaders were unable to make their voices heard. The press was generally unfriendly to labor and the one-sided news coverage kept organized labor on the defensive.

Philip Ash has made an interesting study of the relationship between the periodical press and the coverage it gave the Taft-Hartley Act. "News and general circulation magazines accounted for the largest share of favorable treatment, while the small circulation opinion magazines were the only ones in which appreciable opposition was noted. The analysis concludes that, the public had scarcely had a fair opportunity to learn both sides regarding this controversial issue." The following chart clearly reveals the bias leveled against organized labor.

TABLE I

PERCENT OF ITEM-CIRCULATION BY ATTITUDE AND BY PERIODICAL CATEGORY FOR ITEMS CONCERNING TAFT-HARTLEY ACT

Periodical category	<u>Favor</u>	<u>Neutral</u>	<u>Oppose</u>	<u>Total for each category</u>	<u>Total items circulation for all categories</u>
Trade	74.4%	25.3%	0.3%	100.0%	1.4%
Financial	79.6	15.3	5.1	100.0	0.8
News	31.2	68.6	0.0	100.0	52.4
General	90.5	8.6	0.9	100.0	41.7
Opinion	0.0	64.1	35.9	100.0	3.7
Pol. & Soc.					
Science	41.5	58.5	0.0	100.0	+
All categories	55.7	42.5	1.8	100.0	100.0

²²George Meany, "The Mandate of Big Business," American Federationist, May, 1947, p. 5.

Analysis of data:

First, 94.1 percent of the item-circulation discussing the Taft-Hartley Act is to be found in news and general periodicals. This is consistent with the relative circulation of such journals as the Reader's Digest and Time, as compared with any trade or opinion journal.

Second, somewhat over one-half of the item circulation (55.7 percent) is in Favor of the Act, and only 1.8 percent is Opposed.

These findings suggest that labor arguments, whatever their validity, were presented in the periodical press with negligible impact.

Third...No news periodical carried an item Opposed to the Act.

This study strongly suggests that the position of organized labor regarding the Taft-Hartley Act had negligible impact on the magazine-reading public. The viewpoints of organized labor, presented in positive terms, did not appear in any of the major periodicals of wide circulation. On the other hand, the viewpoints of management and related groups that favored the Act appeared frequently in these periodicals.²³

There is no way of estimating the role the press may have played in the passage of the bill. It is highly probable, however, that it helped shield the Republicans from the truth. No one could disabuse the GOP of its dream of abolishing New Deal legislation. The mandate for change was real for them, and anything less than Democratic annihilation injured their sensibilities.

While labor waged a losing battle against the enactment of the Taft-Hartley bill, the White House was deluged with propaganda regarding the measure. On June 9, 1947, the bill was sent to Truman for his consideration. The White House staff evaluated the proposal and on June 20, 1947, Truman delivered his veto message over the radio.

²³ Philip Ash, "The Periodical Press and the Taft-Hartley Act," Public Opinion Quarterly, Summer, 1948, pp. 266-71.

In challenging tones Truman lashed out at the restrictive provisions of the law. He said, "I vetoed this bill because I am convinced it is a bad bill. It is bad for labor, bad for management and bad for the country." He went on to say that it was a shocking piece of legislation designed to take us back in the direction of the old evils of individual bargaining.²⁴

That same evening Senator Taft delivered a speech over the radio in rebuttal to President Truman's veto message. As usual, the address was well thought out and dry. He compared the President with Lee Pressman, a well-known communist, and said that the President's veto shows that he knows practically nothing about the bill.²⁵ The press echoed Taft's remarks and peppered the public with scathing comments about the President's veto, but few seemed to realize the political significance of his action.

Truman's veto of the Taft-Hartley bill raised his prestige with labor and marked a turning point in his administration. Even though the senate overrode his veto, Truman liberalized his domestic program. Said the President, "I had done all within my power to prevent an injustice against the laboring men and women of the United States."²⁶ He meant it, but more than that he had found an instrument with which to bludgeon the GOP. "Truman used the 'Do-Nothing Eightieth Congress' as a whipping

²⁴Harry S. Truman, "Labor Relations Measure," Vital Speeches, July 1, 1947, p. 547.

²⁵Robert A. Taft, "Labor Relations Measure," Vital Speeches, July 1, 1947, p. 549.

²⁶Truman, Memoirs, II, 30.

boy in the campaign of 1948 to arouse the American people into voting for him and the Democratic Party; the Taft-Hartley Act was one of the major issues he used in castigating this Congress."²⁷

Irwin Ross contends the upswing in Truman's popularity continued throughout 1947. The new air of resolution and authority which he had displayed in domestic affairs also manifested itself in foreign affairs.²⁸ The formulation of the Truman Doctrine, with its aid to Greece and Turkey in March, 1947, and the launching of the Marshall Plan in June of the same year, received generous support from the Eightieth Congress. So much so, in fact, that Charlie Halleck said with a pouting tremor* in his voice, "It always galls me to think that Harry Truman won in 1948 by attacking the Congress which gave him his place in history."²⁹

²⁷Lee, p. 106.

²⁸Irwin Ross, The Loneliest Campaign (New York: New American Library, 1968), p. 17.

*The words "pouting tremor" were not used in any account. The description is the author's interpretation.

²⁹Jules Abels, Out of the Jaws of Victory (New York: Henry Holt, 1959), p. 139.

CHAPTER III

THE 1948 OFFENSIVE

At the closing of 1947, Henry Agard Wallace finally made public his intention to run for the presidency of the United States under the banner of the Progressive Party. Shortly after, in January, 1948, Truman delivered his State of the Union message which presaged his campaign for the presidency. This strategy had been suggested by George M. Elsey, a young assistant to Clark Clifford, as far back as August, 1947. Said Elsey, "The speech must be controversial as hell, must state the issues of the election, must draw the line sharply between Republicans and Democrats."¹ It did. On the following day, Robert A. Taft accused Truman of trying to capture the Left-wing vote by having the Federal government play Santa Claus. Said Taft, "One cannot but feel that the recent announcement of Mr. Henry Wallace has had a substantial effect on the State of the Union. Henry himself will have a hard time to find anything to promise the people of this country which is not included in this message."²

The first goal cited by Truman was "to secure fully the essential human rights of our citizens...Whether discrimination is based on race or creed, or color, or land of origin, it is utterly contrary to American

¹Irwin Ross, The Loneliest Campaign (New York: New American Library, 1968), p. 55.

²Robert A. Taft, "The President's Tax Plan," Vital Speeches, January 15, 1948, p. 199.

ideals of democracy."³ Provocative? Perhaps. Albeit witnesses claim the statement drew little response at the time. However, the civil rights issue was to play a prominent role in the 1948 election when Strom Thurmond and the Dixiecrats bolted from the Democratic Party.

Truman reiterated many of the New Deal policies mentioned before. He asked to raise the level of unemployment compensation and social security. He requested Federal Aid for education, health insurance, a long range housing program, extension of rent controls, conservation of natural resources, crop insurance for farmers, and a minimum wage increase from 40 cents to 75 cents an hour. He asked for \$6,800,000,000 for the European recovery program, but it was the "cost-of-living tax credit" which drew the sharpest response. Hoping to aid lower-income groups, Truman recommended a system whereby each taxpayer could deduct \$40 for himself and \$40 for each dependent.⁴ Republican Representative Harold Knutson gasped at this last proposal. Said Knutson, "Tom Pendergast paid two dollars a vote, and now Truman proposes to pay forty dollars."⁵ And Majority Leader Charles Halleck, "harkening back to the Reconstruction slogan of 'forty acres and a mule,' exclaimed, 'What, no mule!'"⁶

Studied indifference would seem to describe the general reaction towards Truman's State of the Union message. According to newsmen the

³Harry S. Truman, "The State of the Union," Vital Speeches, January 15, 1948, p. 194.

⁴Ibid., pp. 195-98.

⁵Ross, p. 59.

⁶Jules Abels, Out of the Jaws of Victory (New York: Henry Holt, 1959), p. 4.

only spontaneous applause which was heard during his delivery was when he pledged to uphold the Taft-Hartley Act because it was the law-of-the-land, and again when he urged military strength for the United States.

However, if the Republicans thought to ignore the President's program, insofar as it suited them, they were in for a jolt. Truman himself stated that the compelling motive in his decision to run for the presidency in 1948 was to protect the hard-earned reforms of the New Deal. "These benefits were still vulnerable to political attack by reactionaries and could be lost if not safeguarded by a vigilant Democratic administration."⁷ Thus it was that Truman bombarded Congress with a succession of messages pertaining to his program. He deliberately used his presidential powers to generate publicity, convinced as he was that the only lobbyist the whole people had in Washington was the President of the United States.⁸

"Nine messages descended on Capitol Hill between February 2 and March 1: civil rights, extension of certain wartime controls, highway construction, assistance to Greece and Turkey, the International Telecommunication Convention, assistance to China, U.S. participation in the United Nations, housing, extension of the Reciprocal Trade Act." According to Irwin Ross, a good portion of these messages were relatively unimportant; their function was to illustrate Congress' inability to act.⁹ That is a moot point. But one thing was certain, there was nothing precipitous about the decision to launch the campaign in this way. Clark

⁷Truman, Memoirs, II, 170.

⁸Louis Koenig (ed.), The Truman Administration: Its Principles and Practices (New York: New York University Press, 1956), p. 17.

⁹Ross, p. 60.

Clifford's forty page memorandum, outlining the campaign strategy, listed six major points of conflict in 1948. Prominent on the list was the civil rights issue.

On February 2, 1948, the President delivered his historic message on civil rights. The ten-point program was forceful, volatile and explicit. After stating his belief in the equality of men, Truman specified his recommendations. His ten points were as follows:

1. Establishment of a permanent commission on civil rights and the creation of a civil rights division in the Department of Justice.
2. Strengthening of existing civil rights statutes.
3. Federal protection against lynching.
4. Protecting the right to vote--specifically to abolish the poll tax.
5. Establishment of a fair employment practice commission.
6. Prohibition of segregated facilities in interstate transportation.
7. Self-government for the District of Columbia.
8. Statehood for Hawaii and Alaska and a greater measure of self-government for the territories.
9. Equality in naturalization.
10. Evacuation claims of the Japanese-Americans.¹⁰

Since civil rights were equated with Negro rights in 1948, it was the first six points which created the greatest furor. Yet the President doggedly continued on his course. Truman stressed that it was a "minimum program," and anything less would fail to fulfill the Federal government's obligation to protect individual liberties. He promised executive action to prevent discrimination in federal employment and asked for the elimination of discrimination in the armed services.¹¹

The repercussions which followed this pronouncement were explosive.

¹⁰Harry S. Truman, "Civil Rights," Vital Speeches, February 15, 1948, pp. 258-61.

¹¹Ibid., p. 260.

The audacious resentment expressed by the white supremacists seems shocking in 1974, but given the racist circumstances of 1948 the Dixiecrat revolt is at least understandable. Truman had unleashed the fury of the South. Politicians such as the Talmadges and Longs were able to arouse a state of fear, bordering on frenzy, in the minds of the poor whites. "In the eyes of the poor whites, Mr. Truman is trying to break down segregation and compel industries to hire negroes. This would make it even harder for the poor white to earn a living...White supremacy, to the poor white, means more than a hold on self-respect. It means food and clothes. It gives him an edge over the Negro in a fight for a living."¹² Though the advocates for racial justice viewed the message as a victory, the South viewed it as a challenge to arms. The struggle, which has yet to be settled, had begun.

Five days after Truman spoke, a Conference of Southern Governors was held at Wakulla Springs, Florida. Amidst the acrimonious debates, Fielding L. Wright of Mississippi, "a 53-year old lawyer, who is as smooth and cold as a hard boiled egg," suggested an all-southern conference convene in order to discuss a bolt from the Democratic Party. His proposal was denounced. However, a committee was appointed to go to the White House to demand concessions on the civil rights issue. They resolved to meet again after forty days, hoping the cooling off period would bring the Democratic Party to its senses.

In the interim, Truman spoke at the annual Jefferson-Jackson Day dinner in Washington, D.C., on February 19. Addressing an overflow audience, Truman called on the Democratic Party to "battle against reac-

¹²"People of the Week," U.S. News, September 17, 1948, p.43.

tionary conservatism and the privileged few in the coming elections."¹³ Yet he assiduously avoided any direct reference to the dissatisfied elements in his party. This must have been difficult since some southerners had boycotted the dinner.

"A group of South Carolina Democrats canceled plans to attend the fund-raising festivities because of a 'no segregation' policy. Governor and Mrs. Strom Thurmond and Senator and Mrs. Clin D. Johnston headed the list of scheduled absentees."¹⁴ No price was too high for the latter couple to demonstrate their outrage. The Senator and his wife had procured a table located in front of the dias for the price of \$1,100 for the sole purpose of keeping it empty. When questioned about this silent rebuke to the President, Mrs. Johnston said to the press that she had decided not to come "because I might be seated next to a Negro."¹⁵

On February 23, six southern governors conferred with J. Howard McGrath, the Democratic national chairman. The group, led by the tight-lipped and antagonistic J. Strom Thurmond,* fired one question after an-

¹³Associated Press Dispatch, The Oregonian, February 20, 1948, p. 6.

¹⁴Associated Press Dispatch, The Oregonian, February 19, 1948, p. 1.

¹⁵Ross, p. 62.

*Senator Strom Thurmond's vindictive attitude towards civil rights legislation can be better understood in the light of his family background. His grandfather lived in South Carolina after the Civil War when the legislature was "Packed and dominated by illiterate and bewildered Negroes." He was resentful and passed this resentment on to his son John who grew up witnessing violence in the South. John Thurmond in turn looked for his answer to the Negro problem in the demagogical ravings of Senator Tillman, who openly advocated shooting a Negro rather than submitting to his domination. John Thurmond himself later shot a man because he accused him of being a Tillmanite. He was acquitted of murder. ("Southern Revolt," Time, October 10, 1948, p. 26.)

other at the Senator in the attempt to force him to capitulate to their demands. When the party chairman continued to endorse Truman's civil rights plank, the militant group departed with the warning that the South was no longer in the bag.¹⁶

Whereas the States Rights movement seriously imperiled Truman's chances for regaining the White House, the presidential aspirations of Big Jim Folsom, the Kissin' governor from Alabama, did not. However, his antics did furnish an amusing respite from an otherwise worrisome campaign. On February 18, Robert Ruark reported from Montgomery, Alabama, that the seven foot exhibitionist, who "delighted in kissing women, taking off his shoes in public, and sleeping on the sidewalk," desired to straighten out the Democratic Party and announced his intentions to run for the presidency. Folsom claimed he was one of the most dignified men alive and that "when they took a picture of him asleep on the sidewalk, he wasn't showing off. 'I had a nervous stomach and I was tard... after that, when they run the picture to smut me, I kept on a-layin' down out of spite.'" ¹⁷ Needless to say, Folsom's self-nomination for the presidency posed no real threat.

But the rising tide of anti-Truman feeling was beginning to infect the Democratic ranks, undercutting the President's prestige and causing an ever widening rift in the party. Said Arthur Krock in the New York Times, "The Democratic Party is imperiling the President's effectiveness as no major party in this country has done since the Republican radicals

¹⁶ Donald R. McCoy and Richard Ruetten, Quest and Response (Kansas: University of Kansas Press, 1963), p. 102.

¹⁷ Editorial in The Oregonian, February 19, 1948.

impeached Andrew Johnson....At this writing, the President's influence is weaker than any President's has been in modern history."¹⁸

On May 19 the Dixiecrats held another conference at Jackson, Mississippi. By common consent they agreed to reconvene at Birmingham, Alabama, if the Democratic convention insisted on inserting a strong civil rights plank in the platform. In the meantime, the States Rights Committee planned their strategy for the convention which would meet in Philadelphia in July. Until then, they held their anger and ammunition in abeyance.

One of the most absurd aspects of the "dump" Truman movement, which was gaining momentum during the spring, was the drive to enlist Eisenhower for President. "Among the chief agitators," said Truman in his Memoirs, "who claimed that I was not perpetuating the New Deal policies....were the late President's sons, James and Elliott, former Cabinet members James F. Byrnes and Harold Ickes, and Senator Claude Pepper of Florida. There were many others who felt that because the press and polls made it appear that my chances of success...were falling away...someone else would get the Democratic Party nomination."¹⁹

The peculiar thing about the boom to draft Eisenhower was that no one seemed to have a clear idea of the General's views on disputed issues, and even worse, didn't seem to care.²⁰ (He had purportedly said he would have signed the Taft-Hartley Act.) This unethical approach adopted towards

¹⁸ Editorial in the New York Times, April 4, 1948.

¹⁹ Truman, Memoirs, II, 185.

²⁰ "People of the Week," U.S. News, July 16, 1948, p. 32.

Eisenhower as a political vote-getter and figurehead was summarized in an article entered in the Congressional Record. It read:

The Confederates cared little whether or not the general felt as they did about civil rights for Negroes. Mayor Hague and the other city bosses were indifferent to Eisenhower's views on good government or anything else. The Jimmy Roosevelt liberals were equally unconcerned. All these characters were united on only one thing: Ike Eisenhower would make a wonderful label to paste on a package that was rapidly becoming a slow mover. Once in, he would be expected to "go along." In any event, the patronage would be safe.²¹

In retrospect the whole movement seems ludicrous. The party regulars backed the President all the way. And at no time did Truman indicate that he was willing to relinquish what he felt was his inviolable right to the nomination. "The President is traditionally the leader of his party...And no matter how many detractors there may be...The convention will operate in the manner in which the chairman and the President want it to." Furthermore, said Truman in his Memoirs, "In 1948 I was in a position to control the nomination. When I made up my mind to run, those in the party who turned against me could do nothing to prevent it... Presidential control of the convention is a political principle which has not been violated in political history."²²

The Eisenhower boom failed to get enough support to insure its success. It had only resulted in humiliating the President, and in exposing the weakness of the Democratic Party. Although there was a brief resurgence to nominate Ike at the Democratic convention, the drive was essentially irrational and unrealistic.

²¹Gordon McDonough, in Appendix to the Congressional Record, August 5, 1948, p. A4903.

²²Truman, Memoirs, II, 186.

The southern white revolt, the recalcitrant attitude of the Eightieth Congress, the Democratic draft-Eisenhower movement, Wallace's third-party candidacy, and the deterioration of international affairs all persuaded Truman to take the offensive in order to bolster his sagging popularity.²³ The vision of attack germinated in Truman's mind until at last the vehicle whereby he would accomplish his goal was realized. He boldly conceived of a plan to set off on a "nonpolitical," cross-country tour of America. The transparent excuse given for this non-partisan trip was to accept an honorary degree and to deliver the commencement address at the University of California.

Complained Robert A. Taft in Philadelphia, "President Truman has opened his campaign for nomination and election. He is traveling through the country with a fifteen-car train at the expense of the voters. He is blackguarding Congress at every whistle stop in the West for the simple reason that Congress happens to differ with him in his whole philosophy of government."²⁴

True or not, the famous "whistle-stop" tour, which lasted from June 4 to June 18 and covered eighteen states, was a smashing success. Truman spoke from the rear of the platform in order to get closer to the people, developed an "off-the-cuff" style of delivery which proved immensely popular.²⁵ The "Give 'em hell, Harry" rejoinder demonstrated conclusively the enthusiasm of the crowds.

²³McCoy and Ruetten, p. 119.

²⁴Robert A. Taft, "Truman's Program," Vital Speeches, June 11, 1948, p. 553.

²⁵Truman, Memoirs, II, 179.

Since the press and radio were primarily controlled by Republican oriented interests, the President felt it was necessary "to explain the workings of American foreign policy and the status of our domestic problems in a way that the people could understand. I also felt obligated to make clear the obstructionist role which the Eightieth Congress was playing."²⁶ In the seventy speeches he gave, including five major addresses delivered in Chicago, Omaha, Seattle, Berkeley and Los Angeles, Truman achieved his desired goal.

The President, buoyant, optimistic and jaunty, struck a responsive chord with his wayside audiences. The tour, which from all accounts started off slowly, gained momentum and daring as it progressed. "All along the way he jabbed at Congress."²⁷ In Gary, Indiana, Truman said, "...America must have a sound and solid economy...If you support me we will probably get it." In Chicago he cautioned that "communism succeeds only where there is weakness, misery or despair, not in a strong, healthy society." On the occasion of the 100th anniversary of Swedish Pioneers Truman carefully interjected a statement about civil rights. "Let us adopt legislation that will provide...the full rights of citizenship and an equal chance for good jobs at fair wages."²⁸

According to the authors of Quest and Response, the statement about civil rights was not lost upon the minority groups. "If apprehensive Negroes feared, or southern revolt Democrats hoped, that the man

²⁶Ibid, p. 178.

²⁷Associated Press Dispatch, The Oregonian, June 5, 1948..

²⁸Ibid.

would backtrack from civil rights advocacy as an integral part of the program the fears of the former were needless, and the hopes of the latter have gone with the wind."²⁹ The fact that Truman carried Illinois by 33,612, while Chicago's Negroes alone gave him a 128,541 plurality, would indicate the veracity of this statement.³⁰

The "Presidential Special" continued to roll westward as Harry S. Truman continued to "Pour it on." Though the reporters failed to recognize the meaning of the ever increasing crowds, the undisguised adulation of the people did not escape the keen political eye of the President. At Grand Island, Nebraska, he was given a pair of silver spurs which he held triumphantly aloft and said, "When I get them on, I can take Congress to town. Don't think I can't. I'll give them a trial just as soon as I get back to Washington."³¹

But the tour had its share of political missteps as well. According to an editorial in the Portland Oregonian, the presidential tacticians seriously blundered in Omaha. Chairman William Ritchie of Nebraska, announced his withdrawal of support for President Truman because he felt Nebraska and Iowa had been given the "bums rush." Due to mismanagement Truman's address in Omaha was attended by 2,000 in a coliseum with 10,000 seats. "What may happen when he gets to Wallace-split California is anyone's guess," solemnly intoned a reporter.³²

²⁹McCoy and Ruetten, p. 119.

³⁰Ibid., p. 144.

³¹Associated Press dispatch, The Oregonian, June 7, 1948.

³²Editorial in The Oregonian, June 8, 1948.

"I like old Joe Stalin," a remark Truman purportedly made to a trainside audience at Eugene, Oregon, was another faux pas credited to the President.³³ Widely reported in the newspapers, the patently naive statement was distorted to signify Truman was "soft on communism." From evidence attainable, no one appears to know how the people received this declaration of affection. Using hindsight, however, the results of the 1948 election would indicate the people imputed no such motive to the President. The obvious prejudicial view of the press had blown the incident way out of proportion.

A record crowd of 100,000 thronged the streets of Seattle to greet the President. Division Chief P.D. Batson of the police department said the crowd in the downtown area was the biggest he had ever seen. "Confetti was piled deep in the gutters after the parade."³⁴ Truman pressed his advantage. Skillfully playing upon their western loyalties, the President warned the Seattleites that Congress had fought against western development. "They still seem to look on the West as some sort of wilderness in which the nation should invest as little as possible."³⁵ He declared private interests had blocked the development of public power to the people at low cost and threatened, "We can't stand for that, and if you people out here stand for it, it's your own fault."³⁶

He flayed Congress in Bremerton, Olympia and Tacoma, Washington.

³³Associated Press dispatch, The Oregonian, June 13, 1948.

³⁴News dispatch in The Oregonian, June 11, 1948.

³⁵Ibid.

³⁶Ibid.

In the latter pollution-ridden city he attacked the Do-Nothing Congress "for eliminating price controls and for passing a rich man's tax law."³⁷

Truman created a slight wave in Oregon--this can be taken literally and figuratively; the Vanport flood was in progress.* However, the majority of the news reports of the presidential tour waxed dull since the Portland Rose Festival and flood preempted the headlines. The following was typical of the coverage given the President in Oregon.

Oregon may already be considered a lost political cause to the Democratic party, but his (Truman's) smile belied it...He smiled when he said hello and when he said goodbye. He smiled when he asked for information and when he gave instructions... He kept smiling.³⁸

Such was the astute observation of Tom Caton, staff writer for the Oregonian. One can't help but wonder, however, if Tom Caton smiled on November 3, 1948. Nevertheless, this insightful critique should not be surprising since Oregon is traditionally Republican.

As the train clipped along, Truman and his entourage were speedily reaching the highpoint of the trip. At Berkeley, California, 500,000 people attended the commencement exercises to hear Truman speak.³⁹ The crowd was double its usual number. And two days later,

³⁷Ibid.

*President Truman was scheduled to be in Portland approximately two hours for a few hurried conferences about emergency relief for flood victims. A senate resolution which had been approved by the house provided up to \$10,000,000 for relief of flood victims in the Portland-Vancouver area. The measure was sent to the President to sign while he was in Portland. (The Oregonian, June 11, 1948.)

³⁸News article, The Oregonian, June 12, 1948.

³⁹Associated Press dispatch, The Oregonian, June 13, 1948.

an estimated one million people packed the streets of Los Angeles to give Harry Truman the wildest, most prolonged reception he had yet received. Even the dubious Jimmy Roosevelt blanched at the reality.⁴⁰

In his speech delivered to the Greater Los Angeles Press Club, the President acknowledged that, "This has been a most rousing welcome."⁴¹ He recited the record of the Eightieth Congress again, vilifying their ineptness. And then drove the shaft deeper by depicting the hauteur of the East towards the West. He said:

You know, Dan Webster, when the United States was going to build the Pacific Railroad, made the statement in the Senate along in the Eighteen Thirties that the West wasn't any good and the further it could be kept from the eastern part of the United States the better off the country would be. And there are a lot of Republicans nowadays who believe just like old Dan Webster did.⁴²

Truman was popular and loved and he knew it. He ended his speech in Los Angeles by saying, "I've made this trip so I could lay before you my views...If I'm wrong you'll have a chance to tend to me later on, but if I'm not wrong you ought to tend to somebody else."⁴³

The effectiveness of the whistle stop campaign was due to a number of factors. The greatest, of course, being the star performer himself. Merle Miller once wrote "That Harry Truman might be the last human being to occupy the White House, and considering, as he would say, 'the four fellas that succeeded me,' I see no reason to change

⁴⁰Cabell Phillips, The Truman Presidency (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1966), p. 216.

⁴¹Harry S. Truman, "The Eightieth Congress," Vital Speeches, June 14, 1948, p. 550.

⁴²Ibid., p. 552.

⁴³Ibid., 553.

my mind."⁴⁴ Nor did a number of other people who witnessed the jovial, informal and totally human President while he was on his tour.

Margaret Truman, an admittedly prejudicial witness, concurred with this opinion. "I have always believed that the great difference between Harry S. Truman and Thomas E. Dewey in 1948 was Dad's uninhibited refusal to be anyone but himself." She illustrated her point by citing the following example. "After his whistle-stop talks, Dad would introduce first my mother and then me. Mother was introduced as 'the boss' and me as 'the one who bosses the boss.' We never did get him to stop introducing us this way in spite of numerous demands."⁴⁵ Sophisticated? No. Human? Yes.

Another incident which typified his down-to-earth attitude and his concern for others took place in Barstow, California. Unwilling to disappoint a crowd who had waited at the railway station until after midnight, Truman appeared on the rear of the platform of the train clad only in his pajamas and blue bathrobe. The appearance drew cheers and light-hearted banter. Shouted a woman from the crowd, "You sound like you have a cold." "No," quipped Truman, "I only sound like that because I ride around in the wind with my mouth open."⁴⁶

On his return to the capital, the President was quoted as saying he was very happy and pleased with his 15-day, 8,000 mile rail journey

⁴⁴Merle Miller, Plain Speaking (New York: Berkeley Publishers, 1973), p. 15.

⁴⁵Margaret Truman, Harry S. Truman (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1973), p. 23.

⁴⁶"The Presidency," Time, June 28, 1948, p. 13.

to Los Angeles and back. "I think it was educational both for me and the country."⁴⁷

But Washington sages differed amongst themselves about whether Mr. Truman had gained or lost political ground by his trip. His allies contended he had gained stature and had aroused enthusiasm by portraying himself as the champion of the people. His critics said he had spread disharmony by his constant denunciation of the Eightieth Congress.⁴⁸ Yet no one did anything to offset the label of the "worst Congress."

There were a few who recognized the danger to the GOP and sounded the clarion call to arms, but no one heeded the tocsin. Joe Martin claims he called Dewey in Albany after the Republican Convention to warn him. "I cautioned him that he would be making a mistake if he did not begin to talk about the constructive aspects of the Eightieth Congress and not let Truman get away, unanswered, with his constant criticism of our record."⁴⁹ However, the Republicans had by this time decided to keep their campaign techniques on an exalted level of performance. No low gibes or barnyard talk was to be displayed in 1948. Besides there was no need since the GOP had the election cinched.

With the Republican Convention only a few days off, both the President and Congress had much to do. There were 150 or more bills

⁴⁷ Associated Press dispatch, The Oregonian, June 19, 1948.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Joe Martin, My First Fifty Years in Politics (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1960), p. 195.

passed by the Congress which demanded Truman's attention.⁵⁰ Three bills Truman vetoed and three times Congress overruled his vetoes. Still, the President promised "'more vetoes--in due time'...one may be slapped on the housing bill which the President says has been 'emasculated' and now was only 'a real estate lobby bill.'"⁵¹

The closing days of the session were hectic and exhausting. According to Jules Abels, the House had been ahead of the Senate in its work and on the last day had taken a short recess, and then dissolved into a carnival-like atmosphere. Whereas "the Senate remained in continuous session for forty-three and one-half hours, the galleries were jammed with men and women in evening dress until, at 7:00 a.m. in early dawn, the Senate finished and the Eightieth Congress closed up shop."⁵²

⁵⁰Associated Press dispatch, The Oregonian, June 19, 1948.

⁵¹Ibid.

⁵²Abels, p. 48.

CHAPTER IV

THE ELEPHANT COLLAPSES

The rubber elephant, shamefacedly standing on the marquee of the Bellevue-Stratford Hotel in Philadelphia, drooped, sagged and weaved. To the superstitious the GOP symbol may have appeared as an omen of misfortune, but to the confident Republicans it merely indicated, what it was, a defective bauble. The elephant needed constant inflating from a vacuum cleaner.¹

The convention which opened on June 21, signaled for the 1,094 delegates, a return to power after sixteen years of obscurity. In that interval, the face of the GOP had changed radically. No longer was that party ruled and dominated by the Grundys and McCormicks.* Wrote Elmer Davis, "Traditionally the Republicans have been an oligarchic party...a party of group leadership...But," said he, "the solid core is by no means so solid as it used to be; a good deal of it has moved with the times--has realized that the prosperity of the rich is largely dependent on what they sell to the poor, and consequently will be not too brilliant unless the poor have something to

¹"Back to Truman by Default," Newsweek, July 19, 1948, p. 15.

*Joe Grundy, 85-year old, semi-retired boss of Pennsylvania and Colonel Robert McCormick, publisher of the Chicago Tribune, were accustomed to dominating GOP politics in their respective states. McCormick had waged a relentless editorial battle for Taft.

buy with."² Thomas E. Dewey was said to possess the attributes of this new look. Apparently he was a conservative liberal who could combine an avant-garde progressivism with a solidly rigid business base.

The presumably liberal stance was not the only change to be observed in the Republican fold. Women began to play a more important role. There was a total of 113 female delegates at the convention, more than had ever been present before. It marked a 12 per cent gain over the 1944 party gathering.³ Four women were listed as speakers. The most attractive and flamboyant being ex-Congresswoman Clare Booth Luce.

And in the Dewey camp, for the first time in history, women ran the official headquarters for a major candidate. Led by Mrs. Charles H. Weis, Jr., Jane Todd, and Mrs. Carl T. Hogan, a neighbor of the Dewey's, they managed the activities of 200 volunteers.⁴

The introduction of women into an arena once reserved solely for men drew forth a nostalgic sally from Sam Koenig, a New York delegate. Mused Koenig, "They've--uh--limited our stronger language a bit and they've brought in the parlor touch." At one time, "a man could air his purple profanity in thicker cigar smoke and liquor reek, without fear of offending."⁵ Koenig, who had been

² Elmer Davis, "President Dewey's Strange Bedfellows," Harper's, September, 1948, pp. 25-26.

³ Associated Press dispatch in The Oregonian, June 20, 1948.

⁴ Alden Hatch, "The Men Around Dewey," Harper's, October, 1948, p. 41.

⁵ Meyer Berger, Special to the New York Times, June 24, 1948.

present for the McKinley nomination, refrained diplomatically from saying whether the change was for the better or the worse.

The day before the convention, Philadelphia was treated to a noisy demonstration by the exuberant delegates. The pre-convention din shattered the solemnity of the sabbath, proving that amplifiers are not necessary to break the eardrum. By all accounts, poor Eva, Taft's mascot elephant, was totally bewildered by the madcap antics of the crowd.⁶

The Convention Hall, affectionately dubbed "The Steamheated Iron Lung",⁷ was given a last check before the delegates oozed their way into the stadium on Monday. Improvements totaling \$650,000 had been made. The lighting system which had cost \$150,000 was brighter and hotter than ever. So much so, in fact, that the delegates had been cautioned to wear sun glasses to protect their eyes against the glare.⁸ (Considering later reports of colossal hangovers, the sun glasses probably served a dual purpose.)

Harry MacMillan, the organist for the convention, practiced for the opening session. It is not recorded whether he pounded out the theme song "Date in '48", but it has been verified that he rocked the walls of the stadium with his music. In the afternoon, Governor Dwight Green of Illinois and Walter Hallaman of West Virginia, chairman of the arrangements committee, also practiced gesticulating for the TV cameras. Everything seemed to be proceeding without a hitch under the copper domed roof of the stadium.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Meyer Berger, Special to the New York Times, June 21, 1948.

⁸Ibid.

Of the presidential hopefuls, ex-Governor Harold E. Stassen of Minnesota was the first to arrive. Eager and confident, he told a news conference that he would get the majority of delegates amongst the 300 war veterans. (Apparently he imagined his navy record plus his Tarzan-like physique spelled charisma.) Furthermore, he conjectured that he would trail along in third spot on the first roll call and by the ninth would be nominated.⁹

Stassen's headquarters were established at the Warwick Hotel, with the suave, well-known Ted Gamble managing his affairs from the tenth floor of the hostelry.¹⁰ However, Stassen made his presence felt in Dewey's domain at the Bellevue-Stratford as well. In the lobby of the staid Victorian edifice, the Stassen forces had dry-docked a canoe with a beautiful blonde perched in the boat. The nautical effect was topped off by a sign which read: "Man the oars and ride the crest; Harold Stassen has the best."¹¹

The contingent of political aspirants continued to pour into Philadelphia. Dewey, who was considered the leading contender in the race, with Taft running a close second, arrived at the Bellevue-Stratford Hotel on Sunday to the cheers of 1,500 spectators. In the meantime, the rubber elephant had collapsed again and five men raced frantically to upright poor Dumbo, while Dewey walked up the steps for his first reception.

⁹Associated Press dispatch in The Oregonian, June 20, 1948.

¹⁰Editorial in The Oregonian, June 20, 1948.

¹¹Meyer Berger in the New York Times, June 21, 1948.

With quiet sureness, Dewey told a group of reporters that he thought the estimated votes predicted in the "Review of the Week" section of the New York Times was a fair appraisal of the situation. The estimate gave him 331 on the first ballot with 129 for Senator Taft, 152 for Stassen, fifty-three for Governor Earl Warren, and forty-three for Senator Vandenberg.¹² Actually, he was to receive more than 331 votes on the first ballot, but Dewey and his team were being cautious. His lead position had not been easily attained and was at best tenuous. It was felt that unless he won on the first few ballots his chances for the nomination were slim. A brief glance at the history of the primaries will show why Dewey and his staff were anxious.

In a July article in the U.S. News and World Report, the story of Dewey's build-up was attributed to split-second timing, smooth organization and luck.¹³ His past record of failure in the Wisconsin and Nebraska primaries had badly damaged his image. This plus the fact that he had already received the Republican nomination once and failed, caused him to slip further. As Alice Roosevelt Longworth had quipped, "You can't make a soufflé rise twice."¹⁴ Thus it was that in May Dewey set out for the West to test his strength against Stassen, who was at that time a 3-to-2 favorite to win. Oregon was to be the pivotal state.

Standing at the brink of political oblivion, Dewey said, "If

¹²Leo Egan, Special to the New York Times, June 21, 1948.

¹³"Inside Story of Dewey Victory," U.S. News, July 2, 1948, p. 11.

¹⁴Jules Abels, Out of the Jaws of Victory (New York: Henry Holt, 1959), p. 62.

I lose here in Oregon, I'm finished."¹⁵ In desperation he appealed to Senator Wayne Morse for advice. He wanted to know why his strength was waning and how he was to overcome it in order to win in Oregon. The advice he received was to get out and mix. Morse told him he gave the impression of being cold and impersonal.¹⁶ Dewey followed his instructions and cavorted from one end of Oregon to the other. The much publicized picture of Dewey romping up the street surrounded by the Oregon cavemen typified his new approach in campaigning. It was the radio debate* over KEX, however, which clinched Dewey's victory in Oregon and cost Stassen his top-spot as contender in the Republican party.

What may have appeared as an accidental victory in Oregon was, in point of fact, a well-thought-out and deliberately executed battle. The triumvirate, Herbert Brownell, Jr., John Russell Sprague, and Edwin F. Jaeckle, cleverly laid the groundwork and masterminded the strategy for the campaign.

Contrary to Taft's inept campaign manager, Clarence Brown, Dewey's "Team" were geniuses in organizational ability. Brownell, who held the veto power in the triumvirate, had traveled all over the country from 1944 to 1946 building up the image of Governor Dewey. A transplanted Nebraskan lawyer, Brownell has been described as "an idealist in politics; a slim, youngish man with a high balding dome, a long thin face, and the

¹⁵"The Party Chooses to Win," Newsweek, July 5, 1948, p. 13.

¹⁶"Inside Story of Dewey," U.S. News, July 2, 1948, p. 11.

*For the complete text of the radio debate, "Should the Communist Party in the United States be Outlawed?" check Vital Speeches, June 1, 1948, pp. 482-89.

eyes of a devotee."¹⁷

John Sprague, the second man in the trio, was considered the master politician of the group. He was a "handsome man of sixty-one who looks at least ten years younger, with a square tanned face and a powerful body." The third and final member of the triumvirate, Ed Jaeckle of Buffalo, was said to look like an old-time political boss. He was a "huge, white-haired man of fifty-three, with a benevolent smile and shrewd eyes, who came up the hard way through the wards. Like the Roman Emperors of the East and West, he and Sprague divide the Empire State between them."¹⁸

Under the guiding hand of this formidable group, Paul Lockwood, Dewey's secretary, set in motion the letter writing campaign in Oregon. According to Alden Hatch, the "big shots" in New York wrote to the "little shots" in Oregon asking for campaign contributions. As one person bluntly confessed, "They really put the screws on the boys in Oregon."¹⁹

The coup de grace, as stated previously, was delivered on the night of May 17, 1948. Dewey, who was fatigued and apparently suffering from a cold, drew on his reserve strength and like the crusading District Attorney of yore, sparred deftly with Stassen, leaving him stunned and beaten. The triumph of the radio debate raised Dewey's prospects and created the image of a potential winner. The team, eager to propagate the illusion of an unbeatable candidate, worked harder than ever to start a bandwagon effect. With this background, the stage was set in Philadelphia for the final bout between Governor Dewey and Harold Stassen.

¹⁷Hatch, p. 39.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 40.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 41.

Having partially eliminated, or at least weakened Stassen's chances, Dewey cold-bloodedly set out to capture the nomination. He had declared his availability for the presidential candidacy as far back as 1939 when Harold Ickes taunted him by saying, "Dewey throws his diaper into the ring."²⁰ Overeager and politically inexperienced at that time, he had since learned the political machinations which spelled the difference between defeat or success. However, the nomination was still anyone's prize. Just as he had stood at the brink of oblivion in Oregon, he now stood at the threshold of success in Philadelphia. But he could never forget that his most formidable opponent, Robert A. Taft, was ensconced in his headquarters at the Benjamin Franklin Hotel.

On Sunday, Senator Taft and his wife had driven 150 miles from Washington, D.C. to Philadelphia following the adjournment of Congress. Arriving early in the afternoon, the Senator remained remarkably cheerful and alert during his reception even though he had only had two and a half hours sleep in seventy-two hours--two hours Friday night and a half-hour Saturday night.²¹

As the Senator stepped out of his 1946 Plymouth, a phalanx of police cleared a path to the entrance of the Benjamin Franklin Hotel while 1,500 supporters roared their welcome. A brass band played "I'm Looking Over a Four-Leaf Clover," the official Taft convention song.²² According to James Patterson, his biographer,

²⁰"He Did Come Back," Newsweek, July 5, 1948, p. 21.

²¹Clayton Knowles, Special to the New York Times, June 21, 1948.

²²Ibid.

Taft patiently endured the endless refrains. Here is an example of one verse:

We're looking over a four-leaf clover
That we've overlooked before;
One leaf is courage, the second is fight,
Third is our party, that always is right;
No need explainin' the one remainin'
It's Bob Taft over--the four-leaf clover
That we'll overlook no more.²³

And to add to the tedium and cheapen Taft as a candidate, the Senator was obliged to shake the trunk of "Eva Tfat" (Taft spelled backwards) in order to accommodate the photographers.²⁴ But this was not the end. Mishaps and foolishness seemed to dog the Senator.

In a press conference held in the Crystal Room of the Benjamin Franklin shortly after his arrival, Taft demonstrated a forbearance few could parallel. As the Senator and his campaign manager, Clarence J. Brown, settled themselves on a pink sofa, two huge photographs of Taft fell from the wall and scored a direct hit on Taft and Brown.²⁵

Quickly regaining his composure Taft launched into a discussion of his prospects as a candidate. "I think the race is largely between Governor Dewey and myself, and I think I am in the better position." He estimated that there would be "in the neighborhood of 300 votes for him on the first ballot."²⁶ Like Dewey, Taft

²³James Patterson, Mr. Republican: A Biography of Robert A. Taft (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1972), p. 398.

²⁴Ibid., p. 410.

²⁵Irwin Ross, The Loneliest Campaign (New York: New American Library, 1968), p. 94.

²⁶Knowles, New York Times, June 21, 1948.

had miscalculated. Yet there were valid reasons for his appraisal.

Taft's stature in the Republican Party was unquestioned. He was considered the ablest figure in American politics, a man of integrity and independence of mind, albeit provincial in his views.²⁷ Richard Rovere conjectured that the kind of government Taft would lead "would be like him, honest, energetic, competent, colorless, and economical. Strictly from the standpoint of administration, it would probably be first-rate..."²⁸ Though many found his views on foreign policy too parochial, he nevertheless had a substantial following within the ranks of his party.

Both because of his preeminence in the GOP and because of the tentative agreements with the favorite-son states*, Taft had good reason to think he would poll 300 votes. Many of the states were undecided, but some delegates, specifically the Stassen** coalition, were for Taft not Dewey. It was only through the bungling of Taft's forces that he lost states previously slated for him.²⁹

²⁷Richard Rovere, "Taft: Is This the Best Gift We've Got?" Harper's, April, 1948, p. 289.

²⁸Ibid., p. 297.

*The success for either Dewey or Taft depended largely upon the substantial blocs of votes in the following states: 73 in Pennsylvania, 56 in Illinois, 53 in California, 41 in Michigan, 35 in New Jersey, 35 in Massachusetts, 29 in Indiana, 22 in Tennessee and 19 in Connecticut. (Ross, p. 92.)

**Stassen was unrelentingly and unrealistically for Stassen. After his defeat in the Oregon primary, Stassen sought the advice of Alf M. Landon concerning his chances for the GOP nomination. During the three-hour conference Landon said, "Harold, you can put over Dewey, or Taft, or Joe Martin, but you can't make it yourself." Stassen remained unconvinced. ("Behind the Dewey Blitz," Newsweek, July 5, 1948)

²⁹Patterson, p. 411.

Although the three leading candidates, Dewey, Taft, and Stassen, controlled the majority of votes, the Vandenberg and Warren supporters hoped their man would emerge as a compromise candidate in case of a deadlock.

Governor Earl Warren of California, was considered the most liberal of all the candidates placed in nomination. He supported a strong military establishment, aid to Western Europe, and reciprocal trade. In addition, he had a political personality which was a real vote-catcher.³⁰ "Six-foot-1, weighing 215 pounds, and with silvery-blond hair, Warren is an imposing figure. He is soft-spoken, calm, amiable, ever-sure of himself, and ever smiling."³¹ The 57-year old Californian's biggest handicap, of course, was that he was from the West, ergo, less well-known nationally.

Senator Arthur Vandenberg of Michigan, was rated an ideal candidate because of his leadership in foreign policy. But again, it was felt his popularity was too regional. "There was no real Vandenberg sentiment," said Raymond Moley, "except in Washington, D.C., New York City and Michigan."³² Still it was anybody's race and the Senator "was in an ideal position to emerge as compromise choice of battling delegates who could agree on no one else."³³

Upon his arrival in Philadelphia, Vandenberg declared himself

³⁰Ernest K. Lindley, "The Republican Ticket and the Democrats," Newsweek, July 5, 1948, p. 20.

³¹"Man of the West," Newsweek, July 5, 1948, p. 24.

³²Raymond Moley, "Victory for Management and Logic," Newsweek, July 5, 1948, p. 19.

³³"Inside Story of Dewey Victory," U.S. News, July 2, 1948, p. 11

"available" and then disappeared into the seclusion of his headquarters at the Warwick Hotel. His supporters, Senator Henry Cabot Lodge of Massachusetts, Arthur E. Summerfield and Governor Kim Sigler of Michigan, were frustrated by his refusal to "run".³⁴ Yet the Senator was only being faithful to his word. "He said he wasn't 'running' and he isn't," stated the New York Times. In fact, he was less accessible than anyone else in the party. He was quoted as saying, "To deal and trade for delegates...might be good politics, but he felt, it would be, in his case, bad faith and he maintains he will not do it."³⁵

The stakes were high. It was a Republican year and whoever received the nomination had a one way ticket to the White House. The flattery, wheedling, coaxing and "well-placed promises" of patronage had reached Machiavellian proportions by the opening of the convention. Dewey's hurricane forces had taken the initiative in the pre-convention warm-up and aggressively pursued their advantage. The Governor from New York was off to a good start.

While the whiskey glasses and cigarette butts accumulated in the various smoke-filled rooms, the candidates' wives fenced with the press. By far the most exhilarating woman, Mrs. Robert Taft fired salvo after salvo at the reporters, who found her exceptionally good copy. When asked why she wanted her husband to be President she shot back, "Because I want what he wants and because I'd like a good

³⁴Special to the New York Times, June 22, 1948.

³⁵James Reston, Special to the New York Times, June 23, 1948.

President."³⁶ Queried further about the new porch on the White House, Mrs. Taft remarked that on her recent speaking engagement she found the people more excited about the \$15,000 balcony than the 4 billion dollar budget. "To many people," quipped Mrs. Taft, "\$15,000 seems like a lot of porch."³⁷ (It has been said Mrs. Taft would have waged a better campaign than her husband, Robert "Coolidge" Taft.)

Far less colorful, the non-committal, impeccably dressed and somewhat priggish Mrs. Dewey purred her way through her press conference. "I answer no political questions. I think that most of you know that by now,"³⁸ said Mrs. Dewey, and then proceeded to discuss food and fashions. Perhaps the inane level of communication resulted in the gauche question which followed. "A woman reporter asked if the Governor's mustache tickled when she kissed him."³⁹ "Icily" Mrs. Dewey ignored the question and went on to discuss Berkshire soup, one of the Governor's favorite dishes.

The fourth estate, having gleaned all the information available turned its attention to the formal opening of the convention. The first session which convened at 11:07 a.m., mercifully ended at 1:00 p.m.⁴⁰ The hall had become a veritable furnace, and the parboiled delegates left the stadium in order to recoup their forces for the

³⁶Meyer Berger, Special to the New York Times, June 21, 1948

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹"'Just a Wife'", Newsweek, July 5, 1948, p. 22.

⁴⁰Ross, p. 95.

evening session.

"An uninspired affair," said Jules Abels cynically about the 1948 GOP Convention.⁴¹ "The richest, noisiest, the most exuberant quadrennial Republican meeting...since 1932," enthused Meyer Berger of the New York Times.⁴² The gaiety and exhilaration demonstrated by the crowd during the first evening session would tend to verify the latter description.

According to Berger, the 15,000 delegates thrilled to the vibrations of the organ music and the shrill cacophony of the brass band at the start of the session. The crowd then sat in eager silence during the invocation and remained that way as James Melton of the Metropolitan Opera Company sang a number of selections.⁴³

However, the delegates lapsed into a soporific trance as Governor Dwight Green delivered the keynote address. The "tall, silver-haired" Illinoisan excelled in monotony. Droned the Governor, "We are here to nominate the thirty-fourth President of the United States," (this was de rigueur) he continued, "...This is a people's convention. It is of the people, for the people and by men and women in the service of the people."⁴⁴ As his speech got longer and the hall hotter, Green soon lost the attention of his audience. (With oratory like this it should not be surprising.)

⁴¹Abels, p. 62.

⁴²Special to the New York Times, June 22, 1948.

⁴³Ibid.

⁴⁴Text of the Keynote Address, New York Times, June 22, 1948.

As the melting Republicans swabbed their faces with soggy handkerchiefs, Governor Green at last turned from the microphone and relinquished the rostrum to Clare Boothe Luce. Smiling, and fresh looking, Mrs. Luce waved to the galleries. A cameraman shouted, "Throw us a kiss, Mrs. Luce."⁴⁵ She obliged and then stepped forward, with "tensed jaw", to deliver the most incisive, hypnotic speech of the evening. An avowed anti-Truman delegate, she jabbed, poked and ridiculed the President until the audience quivered with delight.

"Our people want a competent President," seethed Mrs. Luce... "Let's waste no time measuring the unfortunate man in the White House against our specifications. Mr. Truman's time is short; his situation is hopeless. Frankly, he is a gone goose."⁴⁶ The crowd roared its approval.

While the time-honored drama of the convention was being dutifully enacted in the Municipal Auditorium, "the forces of two of the leading Presidential contenders, Senator Robert A. Taft of Ohio and Governor Thomas E. Dewey of New York, were fighting to improve their positions."⁴⁷ The "stop Dewey" movement was becoming essential. On the opening day of the convention Taft had already sustained a damaging blow. The credentials committee had voted to seat the sixteen man Dewey delegation from Georgia instead of the Taft delegation which the Senator had assumed he would win. Once again, the superior organizational ability of the Dewey team manifested itself.

⁴⁵James Hagerty, Special to the New York Times, June 22, 1948.

⁴⁶"Address of Hon. Clare Booth Luce", in Appendix to the Congressional Record, August 4, 1948, p. A4836.

⁴⁷William S. White, Special to the New York Times, June 22, 1948.

Much has been written about the contrast between the Dewey and Taft forces, all to the glory of the former and to the detriment of the latter. It appeared that Clarence Brown, Taft's manager, had alienated nearly everyone with whom he came in contact. While Herbert Brownell shrewdly manipulated delegates, Brown wallowed in a morass of triviality. He worried "about such mundane matters as hotel rooms and seats in the gallery for his friends. 'There is more cussing of Clarence Brown...than there has been heard in any political ruckus in recent times.'" ⁴⁸ Still Taft allowed him the reins of control.

James Reston reported "that Harold Stassen and Senator Robert A. Taft, with the blessing and conniving of Col. Robert McCormick of the Chicago Tribune, have been playing footsy under the green baize table." ⁴⁹ Actually, Taft wasn't a "footsy" kind of operator. In fact, had the Senator from Ohio been less integrity-ridden, the steam-roller tactics of Dewey's team would have been easier to stop. Dupli-city was not a part of Taft's character. And his refusal to engage in unethical practices gave Dewey the advantage. Moreover, the failure of the "stop Dewey" coalition to select one candidate created a chasm too wide to breach. "There were too many hopefuls. Each of the dark horses thought he had a chance to win, and without agreement their strength was not tightly held." ⁵⁰ Patterson relates that "with

⁴⁸Patterson, p. 410.

⁴⁹James Reston, Special to the New York Times, June 22, 1948.

⁵⁰"Inside Story of Dewey Victory," U.S. News, July 2, 1948, p. 12.

characteristic candor, Taft proposed that everyone unite behind him."⁵¹ Stassen flatly refused. And according to an article in the U.S. News, when Senator Vandenberg's name was mentioned both Stassen and Taft balked.⁵² "The essence of their impasse was simple: neither Stassen nor Taft hated Dewey enough to withdraw, and neither man thought he could get his delegates to follow if he did."⁵³ "In other words," said James Reston, "while...all have the same limited objectives of stopping Mr. Dewey on the early ballots, actually their long-range objectives are antithetical."⁵⁴

On Tuesday, June 22, Dewey inched closer to victory. The decision of Senator Edward Martin, the favorite son candidate of Pennsylvania, to throw thirty-five to fifty-five votes to Governor Dewey and to second the Governor's nomination, stopped the Taft forces in their tracks.⁵⁵ The move was termed "an act of desperation" by Stassen who was unwilling to admit the consequences of Martin's defection.⁵⁶ And on the 23rd of June, Taft, equally unconvincing, was quoted as saying, "The Dewey blitz has been stopped."⁵⁷ But evidence proved otherwise.

⁵¹Patterson, p. 412.

⁵²"Inside Story of Dewey Victory," U.S. News, July 2, 1948, p. 12.

⁵³Patterson, p. 412.

⁵⁴Special to the New York Times, June 22, 1948.

⁵⁵William S. White, Special to the New York Times, June 23, 1948.

⁵⁶Special to the New York Times, June 23, 1948.

⁵⁷Clayton Knowles, Special to the New York Times, June 24, 1948.

With precision-like tactics, the Dewey team pressed their psychological advantage. The Dewey bandwagon lurched onward, wrote William S. White, though every sort of roadblock was placed in its way.⁵⁸ Charles Halleck** pledged Indiana's twenty-nine votes for the Governor of New York at the very outset of the balloting. Another favorite son, Governor Alfred B. Driscoll of New Jersey, released the thirty-five-man delegation and announced he would vote for Dewey after the first ballot. Senator Jame P. Kem of Missouri and Governor Robert Bradford of Massachusetts also cast their lot with Dewey.⁵⁹ The strategy was working. Dewey was gradually eliminating one adversary after another. But the momentum generated in his headquarters created a sense of urgency in the other groups.

Two more meetings of the opposition were held in the apartment of John D. M. Hamilton. The outcome, as usual, was inconclusive.

⁵⁸William S. White, Special to the New York Times, June 24, 1948.

*White's statement is puzzling. There seemed to be no tangible roadblocks in view. In fact, W. H. Lawrence stated that no united front opposed Dewey because it was felt such a move would be interpreted as a sign of weakness which, in turn, would create confusion among the delegates. The managers for Taft, Stassen, Vandenberg, and Warren feared a coalition would result in a stampede for Dewey. Actually, the reverse proved true. (Special to the New York Times, June 24)

**J. Russell Sprague and Len Hall, a Congressman from Nassau, had promised Halleck the Vice Presidential spot if he would deliver all the delegates from Indiana. Halleck obliged. After Governor Earl Warren was chosen for the second position on the ticket, Halleck was crestfallen. Years later he recounted the incident at a Gridiron Club dinner. Dewey was present and challenged him. "Charlie, did I ever promise you the Vice-Presidential nomination?" "No," said Halleck, "but Sprague and Hall did." (Jules Abels, p. 68) Apparently the rejection had festered in Halleck's heart, but Dewey in typical, oily, lawyer-like fashion exonerated himself.

⁵⁹Ibid.

Each contender refused to yield to the other. "The meeting was secret, but it was announced that the participants agreed at the start that they could not agree, at this time, on one candidate on whom to concentrate their strength."⁶⁰ They dissipated their power and shot their ammunition like shrapnel at the Dewey camp. Few pieces hit the mark.

At approximately 9:00 p.m. on Wednesday, June 23, the nominations began. The stifling heat plus the antagonism of the anti-Dewey forces caused the restless crowd to erupt in an angry demonstration as Senator Martin rose to nominate the Governor from New York. Chairman Joe Martin lashed out at the audience for its discourtesy until the booing finally stopped.⁶¹ The speeches and demonstrations continued into the early dawn. Senator John Bricker nominated Taft. The nomination was climaxed by a 30-minute demonstration. "Then came interminable oratory for Warren, Stassen, Baldwin, Vandenberg, and finally for General Douglas MacArthur, who was in Japan."⁶² At last, bleary-eyed and sleepless, the delegates slouched back to their hotel rooms.

With the temperatures soaring above one hundred degrees, the balloting began on Thursday afternoon. The first vote took only thirty-nine minutes. The second ballot required more time, an hour and two minutes, because five states wished to be polled individually.⁶³ The

⁶⁰W. H. Lawrence, Special to the New York Times, June 24, 1948.

⁶¹"Behind the Dewey Blitz," Newsweek, July 5, 1948, p. 16.

⁶²Patterson, p. 413.

⁶³Ross, p. 105.

Dewey blitz was succeeding. Governor Dewey jumped from 434 on the first ballot to 515 on the second. He was clearly in the lead.

At this juncture, Duff, Sigler, and Clarence Brown rushed to the platform to ask for a recess. Chairman Joe Martin recognized Duff who formally requested the convention adjourn until 7:30.⁶⁴ Although the Dewey supporters roared their protest, the New York delegation acceded to the plea. They had reason to believe they would win on the third ballot with or without a recess.

Taft, who had remained in his air-conditioned room at the Benjamin Franklin Hotel, called Stassen and asked him to release his delegates in his favor. The Minnesotan, steeped in stubbornness or ignorance, refused once again under the misguided notion he could still win. Without a backward glance, Taft immediately drafted a letter which was to be read by Senator Bricker at the Convention Hall when the delegates reconvened. The message, dictated over the phone to James Shattuck, said it was plain that a majority of the delegates were prepared to turn to Mr. Dewey on the third ballot, ergo, Senator Taft was releasing his forces and pledging his support to the New Yorker.⁶⁵ What followed was anticlimactic.

Senator John W. Bricker of Ohio read the letter announcing his friend's withdrawal. The gesture triggered a succession of withdrawals. Senator William F. Knowland of California withdrew for Warren; Stassen strode to the rostrum and declared for Dewey himself; Governor Kim Sigler withdrew for Vandenberg. It was then suggested that

⁶⁴"Behind the Dewey Blitz," Newsweek, July 5, 1948, p. 16.

⁶⁵William S. White, Special to the New York Times, June 25, 1948.

a roll call be dispensed with, but Joe Martin ruled otherwise and the ballot was taken as a matter of form.

The following is the distribution of the votes in the balloting for the GOP presidential nomination:⁶⁶

TABLE II
SUMMARY OF THE BALLOTS

<u>Candidate</u>	<u>First Ballot</u>	<u>Second Ballot</u>	<u>Third Ballot</u>
Dewey	434	515	1,094
Taft	224	274	0
Stassen	157	149	0
Warren	59	57	0
Vandenberg	62	62	0
Martin	18	10	0
MacArthur	11	7	0
Baldwin	19	19	0
Green	56	0	0
Driscoll	35	0	0
Reece	15	1	0
Dirksen	1	0	0

Like Taft, Dewey had remained closeted in his hotel room listening to the returns on radio and television--that is, until the sets stopped functioning, at which time he went to a staff member's room to hear the convention.⁶⁷ When the outcome appeared certain, Dewey left for the Convention Hall to deliver his acceptance speech.

Described as "placating" in tone, Dewey said, "In all humility, I pray God that I may deserve this opportunity to serve our country." He stressed that he was "unfettered by a single obligation or promise to any living person, free to join with you in selecting to serve our

⁶⁶New York Times, June 25, 1948.

⁶⁷Ross, p. 107.

nation the finest men and women..."⁶⁸ William S. White reasoned this last statement meant Dewey had not yet chosen his running mate, and was letting it be known the field was wide open.⁶⁹ The Governor concluded his address with mechanical dreariness. "The ideals of the American people are the ideals of the Republican party. We have lighted a beacon here in Philadelphia, in this cradle of our own independence..."⁷⁰ Banal yet necessary, the ritual ended and Dewey headed back to the Bellevue-Stratford to select the Vice-president.

Stassen, contrary to earlier protestations that he would not accept second spot, declared he was available if drafted.⁷¹ Warren too performed an about-face. The major factor in his sudden change, claimed Warren, was attributed to Dewey's proposal that the Vice-president "act as an assistant President with cabinet status."⁷² In any event, the meeting of advisers and party leaders, which lasted until approximately 4:30 a.m., was furnished with ample candidates to consider. The leading contenders were Halleck, Stassen and Warren.

Halleck, who felt he had a claim on the nomination "because he had swung Indiana to Dewey," was rejected swiftly.⁷³ Stassen was denied the post because it was felt he was inclined "to go it alone

⁶⁸Thomas E. Dewey, "Ideals of Republican Party," Vital Speeches, July 1, 1948, p. 549.

⁶⁹William S. White, Special to the New York Times, June 25, 1948.

⁷⁰Dewey, p. 548.

⁷¹C. P. Trusell, Special to the New York Times, June 25, 1948.

⁷²Clayton Knowles, Special to the New York Times, June 25, 1948.

⁷³"Inside Story of Dewey Victory," U.S. News, July 2, 1948, p. 13.

and not work well with a team," although it was acknowledged he engendered enthusiasm in younger Republicans."⁷⁴ It was Warren, then that emerged as the compromise candidate. "The Stassen group found Warren acceptable. The Halleck group found Warren less objectionable than Stassen."⁷⁵

When the conference recessed, Dewey phoned Warren at the Warwick Hotel and asked him to come over immediately. The two discussed the benefits of the alliance until 6:30 a.m., at which time Warren promised to give an answer by 11:30 a.m. The reply was yes.⁷⁶

While the delegates at the Convention Hall played a waiting game, Senator William F. Knowland was called to the telephone. Informed of the acceptance, Warren's name was placed in nomination and within less than an hour he was chosen as Dewey's running mate. Apparently, Martin had gaveled the nomination through so rapidly that newspapermen had missed it.⁷⁷

The unbeatable team of the Republican party was chosen and what remained to be done seemed almost fruitless. The Republicans, so sure of victory, were compelled to spend time and money on the routine of campaigning. The boredom they felt for these nonessentials continued to manifest itself throughout the election. In an October article in Time, this attitude of the Republicans was stated most succinctly by a newsman when he said, "How long is Dewey going to tolerate Truman's interference in the government?"⁷⁸

⁷⁴Ibid. ⁷⁵Ibid.

⁷⁶"Selected with Care," Newsweek, July 5, 1948, p. 23.

⁷⁷Ibid., p. 24.

⁷⁸"Don't Worry About Me," Time, October 25, 1948, p. 21.

The President, however, had a vastly different view of the projected struggle. Happy with the Republican's nomination of Thomas E. Dewey, Truman predicted his chances of retaining the Presidency had improved. He was "definitely encouraged about the whole political situation."⁷⁹ Having followed the GOP Convention on television,⁸⁰ Truman opined that Mr. Dewey, who "was very much of a conservative," would provide an excellent target for his gibes. He said, "that the 1948 Republican platform was 'nothing but the reiteration of promises they have failed to keep in the past.'" Furthermore, Truman felt the failure to nominate Vandenberg had helped him enormously since Democratic strategists considered him the most dangerous opponent.⁸¹

As the month of June came to a close, it witnessed the conflicting attitudes of the three Presidential office seekers. Henry A. Wallace, dog-paddling for his life and increasingly bitter, called President Truman "a self-annointed angel, whose head is too big for his halo."⁸² And Truman, who was only too aware of Wallace's declining popularity, savagely ignored him while simultaneously clapping his hands at Dewey's nomination. And what of the redoubtable Governor from New York? Well, he just licked his leonine-like chops in anticipation of the feast on November 2, 1948. With the protagonists thus squared off in battle array, Truman prepared for his visitation to the city of brotherly love.

⁷⁹John D. Morris, Special to the New York Times, June 26, 1948.

⁸⁰United Press Dispatch to the New York Times, June 23, 1948.

⁸¹Morris, re-cite.

⁸²United Press Dispatch to the New York Times, June 21, 1948.

CHAPTER V

THE DONKEY STANDS FIRM

Lured by a cool \$250,000,* the Democrats converged on Philadelphia in mid-July for their convention. The marquee of the Bellevue-Stratford, once again, sported a political symbol. But, this time, instead of a collapsing elephant, the marquee hugged to its bosom, a romping, exuberant, papier-mâché donkey. "...Less vulnerable to cigarettes and arrows of outraged Republicans,"¹ the donkey snorted puffs of smoke, wiggled its ears, swished its tail and exultantly viewed the scene below through its large, electric eyes.

According to a report in the London Times, the donkey motif was carried throughout the city. Eager for patronage, one enterprising proprietor tethered a donkey to a lamp-post outside his bar. A pile of hay was dumped on the sidewalk for grazing. Quote the storyteller, "In 1932 Herbert Hoover predicted that if the Democrats were elected there would be grass growing in the streets of New York. He has had to wait sixteen years, but this is surely a partial vindication."²

*Both the Republicans and Democrats were given \$250,000 by the city of Philadelphia to induce them to hold their conventions there. Wallace's party was given nothing. This money was not charity. Philadelphia hoped to receive \$35,000,000 in return from the free-spending delegates. (Irwin Ross, The Loneliest Campaign, p. 93.)

¹Special Correspondent to the London Times, July 12, 1948.

²Ibid.

Nonetheless, in spite of a frisky outward appearance, a funereal pall had enveloped the city. "The Democrats came to Philadelphia as low in their minds as the Republicans were when they assembled for the Landon convention in 1936. There was not a hopeful delegate in a carload."³ "The 1,592 delegates...acted as if they were attending a funeral."⁴ The mood of pessimism, so dolefully expressed, was attributed to the fact that the Democrats had "no practical alternative to nominating for President the incumbent, Harry S. Truman, and they suspect that he will be defeated by the Republican nominee."⁵

The graveyard portrayal of the Democratic convention persisted and grew. According to one wag, the situation got so solemn that Philadelphia opened its bars on Sunday to liven things up. All to no avail. "The delegates drank bourbon, scotch and rye as if it were so much embalming fluid --and with about the same effect." Cab drivers complained, "We got the wrong rigs for this convention. They shoulda given us hearses." And still another man mournfully suggested the multi-colored tickets for use in the convention hall be changed to one color, "deep black."⁶ And so the stories went.

But not everyone had buried the Democratic party, least of all the President of the United States. Harry S. Truman, in the face of almost perpetual gloom, had buoyantly maintained a winning outlook. Dispelling

³Helen Fuller, "The Funeral is Called Off," New Republic, July 26, 1948, p. 10.

⁴"Back to Truman by Default," Newsweek, July 19, 1948, p. 15.

⁵Editorial in the New York Times, July 11, 1948.

⁶Meyer Berger, Special to the New York Times, July 12, 1948.

the aura of depression around him, the President had hung a talisman in the corridor outside his office. The object was "nothing more than a political cartoon,"* yet Truman's associates drew strength and comfort from it. The talisman had inspired a slogan which they repeated, "He's always licked in May and elected in November."⁷ But the goodluck piece had not beguiled Truman. His optimism was based on the firm conviction that he had given the country a good and honest administration.⁸ The cartoon served only as a reminder that he had the ability to win against overpowering odds.

"Nobody knew better than Harry S. Truman...that, in American politics you can't beat somebody with nobody. He was somebody--the President of the United States."⁹ He knew he controlled the "hard core" of the party and consequently never concerned himself with the Eisenhower boom or the draft Douglas proposal. The ridiculous and mutinous spectacle of the Democrats caused him to deplore "more in sorrow than in anger the dissension in the party because of the comfort and ammunition it furnished the opposition."¹⁰

*The political cartoon was considered one of the most "derisive" ever sketched about Truman. The drawing depicted two huge trucks which had crashed head-on. The trucks were labeled "Stark" and "Milligan." They blocked the way of a tiny truck named "Truman." The scene represented the 1940 Senatorial race in which Truman was considered a lost cause. The caption under the cartoon read: "No place for a kiddie car." Truman won.

⁷Anthony Leviero, Special to the New York Times, July 11, 1948.

⁸Ibid.

⁹"Truman and the Stop-Truman Revolt," Newsweek, July 12, 1948, p. 19.

¹⁰Anthony Leviero.

The Eisenhower movement which had been quelled in the past, gained impetus after the Republican Convention when the vote-getting team of Dewey and Warren was announced. The anti-Truman Democrats panicked, and in their desperation, once again, sought to draft Ike, even though the general had squelched the offer previously.¹¹ The last-ditch stand of Jimmy Roosevelt, the big-city bosses, the ADA and the Southern rebels to force Ike to accept the nomination, however proved futile. Roosevelt, who had suggested the delegates join in a rebel caucus at Philadelphia on Saturday, July 10, just two days before the convention opened, to "seek the ablest and strongest man available," finally recognized the error of his ways.¹² On Friday, July 9, General Eisenhower had sent a telegram to Senator Claude Pepper of Florida, who had planned to place Ike's name before the convention. The message read, "No matter under what terms, conditions, or premises a proposal might be couched, I would refuse to accept the nomination...I ask you to accept my refusal as final and complete, which it most emphatically is."¹³

At this juncture, Ike was dropped, and the name of Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas was aired as a possible candidate. But the Douglas movement proved even more short-lived than the Eisenhower boom. According to an article in Newsweek, Mayor William O'Dwyer of New York, who was Douglas' greatest proponent, inexplicably destroyed his chance for the nomination. With no advance notice, O'Dwyer announced in a joint

¹¹ Editorial in the New York Times, July 11, 1948.

¹² "Truman and the Stop-Truman Revolt," Newsweek, July 12, 1948, p. 20.

¹³ "From Tempest to Calm," Newsweek, July 19, 1948, p. 15.

communicate with Jake Arvey that "We are now convinced that General Eisenhower is unavailable...It is in the best interest of our country and party that our democracy unite for President Truman."¹⁴ The statement, which took many by surprise, effectively stopped the Douglas supporters. Yet the man around whom the anti-Truman forces had gathered remained unperturbed by the events. Justice Douglas who was fishing in Oregon, said, "I never was a-runnin'; I ain't a-runnin' and I ain't goin' tuh."¹⁵

Still cheerful, still resolute, Truman had yet another indignity to suffer. This time it came from the direction of the muddleheaded, thoughtless Mrs. Clare Booth Luce. Suffering from an acute case of egotism, undoubtedly caused by her success at the GOP convention, Mrs. Luce haughtily suggested a winning formula for the President. She asserted he was doomed to defeat unless he chose Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt as his running-mate. "She is the only person in the party qualified to tear the Roosevelt mantle off Wallace and, by sharing it with Mr. Truman, partially restore it to him."¹⁶ When queried by the press, President Truman politely said that Mrs. Roosevelt would be well-qualified for the job. However, she declined. So ended another ludicrous episode in the 1948 election.

On Sunday, July 11, the final absurdity of the "stop Truman" movement was enacted by Senator Claude Pepper at the abandoned headquarters of General Dwight D. Eisenhower. Disappointed by the refusal of Eisenhower and Douglas to accept the nomination, the Senator announced at a

¹⁴Ibid., p. 16.

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶"Mrs. Vice-President," Newsweek, July 12, 1948, p. 21.

press conference that he intended to run for the presidency. Backed by a total of six and one-half votes from his home state of Florida, Pepper declared, "This is a fight and I believe we can make it a winning fight, even if we are starting tardily."¹⁷

William Ritchie, the disgruntled Nebraska state chairman, spoke in Pepper's behalf. He declared that the Senator "could have counted on between 300 and 400 votes...on the first ballot" if there had not been a delay in the announcement of his candidacy. However, he went on to say, "If we didn't think that we had a chance to win most of us would fold our tents and steal quietly away."¹⁸ Which is exactly what Pepper did on Tuesday, when he withdrew from the race.

His candidacy, described as the "hottest and funniest" story of the week, had never been taken seriously. However, it did afford a certain amount of comic-relief in an otherwise solemn atmosphere. The farce was carried to completion on Tuesday when one last attempt was made to promote his cause at the convention hall. A young twenty-two-year-old girl tried to ride a horse into the auditorium. Stopped by a policeman, she said, "Everybody likes horses, everybody likes Pepper." Unruffled, the lawman told her "she should have tried a donkey."¹⁹

With the last obstacle to Truman's nomination removed, the Democratic National Convention officially opened on Monday, July 12. The first session, like that of the GOP convention, was comparatively quiet

¹⁷W.H. Lawrence, Special to the New York Times, July 12, 1948.

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Irwin Ross, The Loneliest Campaign (New York: New American Library, 1968), p. 116.

and subdued. However, in the evening session, the auditorium suddenly came alive as Senator Alben Barkley delivered his sixty-eight minute keynote address.²⁰

The seventy-year old Kentuckian, long a favorite of the politicians in Washington, D.C., resurrected the hopes of the Democratic Party with his wit and invective. "His sharp, biting phrases caught the fancy of the delegates,"²¹ and they alternately cheered and laughed as he denuded the Republican Party of its chivalrous claims. In stentorian tones, Barkley castigated the Republicans for condemning the New Deal. "...Let us inquire what is this cankering, corroding, fungus growth, which every Republican orator...denounced with unaccustomed rancor; then, in their platform, hugged to their political bosom as if it were the child of their own loins?...It was recovery."²² The audience cheered, and Barkley knowing he had captured the imagination of the crowd, threw himself into the speech with even more fervor.

He extolled the record of the Democratic Party during its fourteen years of control, and attacked the record of the "reactionary" Eightieth Congress for the high cost of living. He quoted Hugh Scott as saying in 1943, "It is time for the Republicans to take over. We are the best stock. We are the people who represent the real grit, brains and backbone of America."²³ Pouncing on this arrogant statement, Barkley flung

²⁰W.H. Lawrence, Special to the New York Times, July 13, 1948.

²¹Ibid.

²²Alben Barkley, "Record of Democratic Party," Vital Speeches, August 1, 1948, p. 613.

²³Ibid., p. 616.

back, "The new Republican chairman insists that it must be a government of the best people, by the best people and for the best people. This is a resurgence of the...doctrine that only the rich, the well educated and the well born are qualified to participate in government..."²⁴ Boos echoed throughout the chamber,²⁵ followed shortly thereafter by laughter and applause when he said, "What is a bureaucrat? A bureaucrat is a Democrat who holds some office that a Republican wants."²⁶

"Cheering to the rafters," the delegates spontaneously staged a 28-minute demonstration at the end of the speech.²⁷ Led by Kentucky, the standards were raised in tribute and "brought to the platform for the great man to touch."²⁸ The audience sang "My Old Kentucky Home" while the banners inscribed with "Barkley for Vice-President" bobbed up and down in the hall. Visibly affected by the demonstration, Senator Barkley raised his hand in acknowledgment. A number of party leaders, including James Roosevelt, the wayward Californian, strode to the platform to congratulate him on his oratorical brilliance.²⁹

The reward for his performance was the vice-presidential nomination,

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Special to the New York Times, July 13, 1948.

²⁶Alben Barkley, p. 617.

²⁷W.H. Lawrence, Special to the New York Times, July 13, 1948.

²⁸Robert Bendiner, "Rout of the Bourbons," Nation, July 24, 1948, p. 91.

²⁹Special to the New York Times, July 13, 1948.

or so the story goes. It seems many journalists felt the Democratic Party would have preferred Alben Barkley for the presidential spot, but since that was impossible, they automatically handed him second place on the ticket. Robert Bendiner, who described the convention as desperate for a miracle that would give them a new leader, said the demonstration accorded Barkley was an indication of the delegates wish to supplant Truman. A few of the signs which read "Barkley for Vice-President" had had the word "Vice" roughly crossed out.³⁰ Presumably this was further indication of the delegates objections to Truman.

W.H. Lawrence of the New York Times had this to say about it. "While there is no doubt now that Mr. Truman will be renominated on the first ballot tomorrow night, the Barkley demonstration was at least a sign of resistance by the delegates to letting the White House dictate the selection for the No. 2 spot if it is anybody but Senator Barkley."³¹

Truman had shown preference for Justice Douglas as his running mate. He reasoned, and correctly so, that Douglas was younger, more liberal and represented a different section of the country as opposed to Senator Barkley, who at seventy, had become somewhat set in his philosophy, and unfortunately represented the same area of the United States as Truman. However, when it was made manifestly clear that Douglas would not accept the vice-presidential nomination and that the party wanted Senator Barkley for the spot, Truman agreed. "My approval of Barkley as a running mate was not a matter of sudden impulse," said Truman in his Memoirs. "I had long respected him as one of the ablest debaters on the floor of the Sen-

³⁰Robert Bendiner, p. 91.

³¹W.H. Lawrence, Special to the New York Times, July 3, 1948.

ate. He was a hard-working, honest politician and one of the most popular men in the Democratic Party. As a thoroughly acceptable candidate to the South, Barkley made an ideal partner to run with me in 1948."³²

On the second night of the convention a memorial service was held in honor of Franklin Delano Roosevelt and the nation's war dead. Due to "microphone distortion and inadequate preparation of delegates and guests" the ceremony was more embarrassing than devotional. To the mortification of Mayor William O'Dwyer, who was leading the service, the audience of 12,000 whistled, cheered and applauded the hymns and prayers. Intoned the Mayor, "In the solemnity of this hour, our thoughts are of those who died that this great nation might live."³³ But the hour was neither solemn, nor were the delegates thinking of the dead. Instead the crowd continued to display its ignorance and bad taste. Mercifully, the memorial service ended.

This ordeal had no sooner concluded, however, than another unwanted disturbance took place. The civil rights issue, long smoldering beneath the surface, was unexpectedly brought into the limelight. George L. Vaughn, a Negro delegate from St. Louis and a member of the credentials committee, appeared on the platform to submit a minority report. Vaughn charged that the Mississippi delegation had intended to walk out of the convention if Truman's civil rights plank was incorporated into the platform. Ergo, Vaughn protested the seating of the delegation. Raising a clenched fist, he yelled, "Three million Negroes have left the South since

³²Harry S. Truman, Memoirs (New York: Doubleday and Company, 1956), II, 191.

³³Meyer Berger, Special to the New York Times, July 14, 1948.

the outbreak of World War II to escape this thing. I ask the convention to give consideration...."³⁴ That was it. Vaughn was stopped in the middle of his sentence as bedlam broke out in the hall. The stadium reverberated to the ugly sound of boos and catcalls from the southern Democrats.

What followed was quick, too quick to have solved the problem. Barkley pounded his gavel and demanded a voice vote. The shouts of the Northerners, who were eager for one, could not be heard because the floor mikes had been cut off. In the ensuing pandemonium, the Mississippi delegation was accredited, but the uproar was not stilled. The Chairman of California, Jack Shelley, pushed his way onto the platform and screamed at the Sergeant of Arms, "You'd better not cut the mikes on us tomorrow when we start talking on civil rights."³⁵ There was no turning back now. The next day the dreaded explosion over the issue would have to be confronted.

Wednesday, July 14, Senator J. Howard McGrath announced that the delegates would assemble at 11:00 a.m. and remain in session until all business had been completed.³⁶ The decision was greeted with enthusiasm, and the work of adopting the platform and voting for presidential and vice-presidential candidates got under way.

The inevitable happened. The storm erupted when four minority

³⁴"Democrats," Time, July 26, 1948, p. 12.

³⁵Ibid.

³⁶Meyer Berger, Special to the New York Times, July 14, 1948.

amendments to the civil rights plank were introduced before the convention. Ex-governor Dan Moody of Texas, Walter Sillers of Mississippi and Cecil Sims of Tennessee offered similar amendments defining the sovereignty of the states.³⁷ Then a minority report from ADA leaders, Andrew Biemiller of Wisconsin and Hubert Humphrey, the 37-year old mayor of Minneapolis and spokesman for the group, was presented. The Northern report differed "in its demand for congressional action on fair employment practices, mob violence, and equality in political participation and military service."³⁸

The volatile speaker for the liberal plank, Hubert Horatio Humphrey, electrified the audience when he said, "There are those who say to you-- we are rushing this issue of civil rights. I say we are a hundred and seventy-two years late." He continued, "The time has arrived for the Democratic party to get out of states' rights and walk forthrightly into the bright sunshine of human rights."³⁹ There followed a ten-minute demonstration.

Sam Rayburn immediately called for a vote on the Texas amendment. It lost by an overwhelming margin--925 to 309. The other two southern amendments were also quickly rejected. With the Northern liberals firmly in control, the Humphrey-Biemiller report was passed by a roll call of 651½ to 582½.⁴⁰ It had carried by 69 votes. "The South had been

³⁷"Democrats," p. 13.

³⁸Donald McCoy and Richard Ruetten, Quest and Response (Kansas: University of Kansas Press, 1973), p. 125.

³⁹Ross, p. 125.

⁴⁰C.P. Trussel, Special to the New York Times, July 15, 1948.

kicked in the pants, turned around and kicked in the stomach. The Humphrey and Biemiller crowd roared in triumph."⁴¹ But the South was to have its revenge.

Raymond Moley, in an analysis of the convention, felt the Democrats had blundered badly in the handling of the civil rights issue. Instead of consulting with the Southern leaders and seeking their help in solving the Negro problem, the liberals had challenged them beyond endurance. According to Moley, both Truman and McGrath had tried to get a compromise in the platform which would have appeased the South, but the ADA had fouled it up. The compromise was almost achieved "when three political midgets got before the convention the offensive plank which was finally adopted." Still, Moley insisted, "efficient" management could have kept that plank from a vote."⁴² Perhaps. But there is no conclusive evidence that Moley's view is correct. Truman had maintained a strict silence during the floor debate. And afterwards he alleged that he "was perfectly willing to risk defeat in 1948 by sticking to the civil-rights plank" in his platform. In fact, he emphasized, "There were people around me... who were anxious to prevent any sort of split in the Democratic party, and efforts were made to soften the approach...I would not stand for any double talk on this principle...I wanted to win the fight by standing on my platform, or lose it the same way."⁴³

McCoy and Reutten, uncertain of the truth, conjectured that, "The

⁴¹"Democrats," p. 13.

⁴²"Bad Faith without Good Judgment," Newsweek, July 26, 1948, p. 22.

⁴³Truman, Memoirs, II, 182.

final plank was probably stronger than he [Truman] would have liked as a presidential candidate confronted with the possibility of losing most of the South in November, despite his later statement that the plank was his own."⁴⁴

Though one may speculate ad infinitum on the intended motives of the principal actors, the results were predictable. When the delegates reconvened for the evening sessions, Alabama's Chairman Handy Ellis launched into a scathing denunciation of the convention. He said the eleven electors of Alabama had been commissioned "never to cast their vote for a Republican, never to cast their vote for Harry Truman, and never to cast their electoral vote for any candidate with a civil rights program such as adopted by this convention...We cannot participate further..."⁴⁵

Having thus spoken, Ellis stalked out of the convention hall followed by half of the Alabama delegation and the entire Mississippi contingent of twenty-two.⁴⁶ Furious by their defection, the galleries jeered as they walked "stony-faced" down the aisles, waving the Confederate flag. Once outside, the group was asked to pose for news photographers in spite of a rainstorm. "Show a little life!" yelled the cameramen.⁴⁷ The delegates dutifully obliged.

⁴⁴McCoy and Ruetten, p. 126.

⁴⁵"Democrats," p. 13.

⁴⁶World News Summarized, New York Times, July 15, 1948.

⁴⁷Ross, p. 128.

And back inside the hall, the convention continued. There remained only the business of nominating Mr. Truman and Mr. Barkley. The Southern states: Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia and the remnants of the Alabama delegation, voted solidly against Truman. Senator Richard B. Russell of Georgia was nominated as their protest candidate for President. However, the gesture of defiance was futile. (North Carolina was the only Southern state to cast any votes for Truman.)⁴⁸

The President was nominated on the first ballot just as he had predicted. The votes were 947½ for Truman, 263 for Russell and ½ vote for Paul V. McNutt. The protocol of an extra ballot to make the presidential nomination unanimous was dispensed with because of the intransigent mood of the South. Alben Barkley, however, was nominated by acclamation for the vice-presidency.⁴⁹

Mr. Truman had arrived at the convention hall at 9:41 p.m., accompanied by his wife and daughter. But four more hours were to pass before he could deliver his acceptance speech. In the meantime, he sat on a ramp outside the stage entrance--he had fled McGrath's office because of the heat--amiably chatting with his friends and watching the trains go by. "Smartly attired in white linens with two-tone black and white summer shoes," Truman appeared unruffled by the long confinement.⁵⁰ Con-

⁴⁸"Effects of New Deal Victory," U.S. News, July 23, 1948, p. 20.

⁴⁹World News Summarized, and Felix Belair, Jr., Special, New York Times, July 15, 1948.

⁵⁰James Reston, Special to the New York Times, July 15, 1948.

fidant, he waited for the call.

Finally, at 1:30 a.m., the President and Senator Alben Barkley entered the auditorium and walked towards the platform, while the band played "Hail to the Chief." With confetti and streamers flying, Chairman Sam Rayburn began his introductory remarks when he was unexpectedly interrupted by Mrs. C.E. Miller* of Philadelphia. Taking over the microphone, she announced that she was happy to present the President with a floral replica of the Liberty Bell. With that, she "released forty-eight white doves from a basket on the platform." The birds, frightened by the lights and confusion, "zoomed" toward the ceiling. They dashed themselves against the rafters, got entangled in the bunting and swooped and dived at the people on the platform.⁵¹ Irwin Ross describes the event as "the climactic bit of convention nonsense" which the audience loved.⁵² And a photograph of the proceedings shows Truman laughing heartily at the show. However, in a more revealing light, we have Margaret Truman's honest evaluation of the incident. Said she, "The doves were an incredible disaster. One almost perched on Sam Rayburn's head... another blundered into an upper balcony and plunged to the floor, dead or unconscious." Disgusted by the antics, Margaret Truman summarized her version of the affair when she wrote, "Ignoring this idiocy, my father strode to the lectern and opened a small black loose-leaf book in

*Mrs. Emma Guffey Miller belonged to a liberal bloc "that was trying to convince the Democratic party and the country that peace with Stalin could be won by appeasement." The birds represented "doves of peace." (Margaret Truman, Harry S. Truman, p. 13.)

⁵¹Special to the New York Times, July 15, 1948.

⁵²Ross, p. 129.

which he carried the notes of his speech."⁵³

The black leather folder, mentioned above, contained eighteen pages of notes. Truman's proven technique of speaking extemporaneously was to be employed, once again, in one of his most vibrant deliveries. Adjusting the microphones upward in preparation for his talk, the photographers howled their indignation because their view was obscured. Unmoved by their pleas, the President said, "I am sorry that the microphones are in your way, but...I have to be able to see what I am doing, because I always have to be able to see what I am doing."⁵⁴ Then, in what James Reston described as a "fighting mood," Truman plunged into his acceptance speech.⁵⁵

Strong, assertive and exuding a vitality that uplifted the spirits of the delegates, Truman cried, "Senator Barkley and I will win this election and make these Republicans like it, don't you forget that. We'll do that because they're wrong and we're right, and I'll prove it to you..."⁵⁶

The delegates, who had been in session for more than seven hours, rose to their feet and cheered the man who was every inch a leader. Losing none of his magnetism throughout the delivery, Truman continued. "I'll say to labor just what I've said to the farmer. They are the most ungrateful people in the world if they pass the Democratic party by this

⁵³Margaret Truman, Harry S. Truman (New York: William Morrow, 1973), p. 13.

⁵⁴Harry S. Truman, "For Victory and a Great Cause," Vital Speeches, August 1, 1948, p. 610.

⁵⁵James Reston, New York Times, July 15, 1948.

⁵⁶Truman, p. 610.

year."⁵⁷

Then he "waded" into the Eightieth Congress and the Republican platform. Referring to the GOP as the party of "special privilege," Truman accused them of refusing to act on the housing problem, high prices and social legislation which would benefit the common man. "I wonder," mused Truman, "if they think they can fool the people of the United States with such poppycock as that?"⁵⁸

Having satisfied himself with his rebuke of the Eightieth Congress, Truman delivered his master stroke of the evening. Unknown, except by a few close associates, he announced his decision to call a special session of Congress on the 26th of July. Explaining that his duty as President required that he use every means at his disposal to get the laws the people needed, he went on to say:

On the twenty-sixth day of July, which out in Missouri they call Turnip Day,* I'm going to call that Congress back and I'm going to ask them to pass laws halting rising prices and to meet the housing crisis which they say they're for...At the same time I shall ask them to act on...aid to education, which they say they're for; a national program, civil rights legislation, which they say they're for; an increase in the minimum wage--which I doubt very much they're for; an extension of social security coverage and increased benefits, which they say they're for...I shall ask for adequate and decent laws for displaced persons in place of the anti-Semitic, anti-Catholic law which this Eightieth Congress passed.

⁵⁷Ibid.

⁵⁸Ibid., p. 612.

*When asked by Merle Miller why he called the special session Turnip Day, Truman gave the following reply. "The twenty-sixth of July, wet or dry, always sow turnips. Along in September they'll be four, five, maybe six inches in diameter, and they're good to eat--raw. I don't like them cooked." (Plain Speaking, p. 257.)

They could do this job in 15 days if they wanted to do it... They are going to try to dodge their responsibilities, they're going to drag all the red herrings they can across this campaign. But I'm here to say to you that Senator Barkley and I are not going to let them get away with it.⁵⁹

Although it was almost 2:30 a.m., the crowd broke into a frenzy of applause. Revived by Truman's courage, the delegates manifested, for the first time, a feeling of possible victory in the election. "You can't stay cold about a man who sticks his chin out and fights," said one of the participants.⁶⁰

The reaction of the opposition was foreseeable. No one was surprised, least of all Truman, when the deluge of denunciations followed his announcement of the special session. Dewey, who had carefully appraised the situation, cautiously enunciated that it was "a frightful imposition."⁶¹ The press, having no reason to temper its statements, screamed that the Turnip Session was "a cheap political trick," "a last hysterical gasp of an expiring administration," "a political maneuver pure and simple," and "a shoddy partisan trick."⁶² And Joe Martin, described as a politician "equipped with nothing but perseverance," warned, "There will be plenty of action. Like the boys at Bunker Hill, we'll wait to see the whites of their eyes."⁶³

⁵⁹Ibid.

⁶⁰"Up From Despair," Time, July 26, 1948, p. 14.

⁶¹Michael Straight, "Turnip Day in Washington," New Republic, July 26, 1948, p. 7.

⁶²Excerpts from Editorial Comments, New York Times, July 16, 1948.

⁶³Robert Allen and William Shannon, Truman Merry-Go-Round (New York: Vanguard Press, 1950), p. 186; and "The Turnip Day Session," Time, July 26, 1948, p. 15.

But while the opposition raged and the members of his own party fretted about the outcome of his audacious move, Truman, ensconced safely in the White House, chortled delightedly at the storm he had created. "I called a special session of the Congress," wrote the President in his diary. "My, how the opposition screams. I'm going to make them meet their platform promises before the election." And the next day, even more pleased by the reaction, he wrote, "Editorials, columns and cartoons are gasping and wondering. None of the smart folks thought I would call the Congress...I don't believe the USA wants any more fakers...So I'm going to make a common sense intellectually honest campaign. It will be a novelty--and it will win."⁶⁴

He was not alone, however. Another man, equally delighted and unperturbed by the furor, was Clark Clifford. Truman's handsome assistant, who had been informed of the move 24 hours prior to the announcement, approved the Presidential gambit. Said Clifford, "We've got our backs on our own 20-yard line with a minute to play; it has to be razzle-dazzle" all the way.⁶⁵ And what could be more "razzle-dazzle" than the Turnip Session? "Not since 1856 had a President called back Congress in an election year."⁶⁶

Admittedly a political move, the action of the President nevertheless succeeded in drawing attention to his campaign target, the Eightieth Congress. It was a "brilliant maneuver," placing the Republicans

⁶⁴Margaret Truman, pp. 14-15.

⁶⁵"But Truman Rides Again," Newsweek, July 26, 1948, p. 21.

⁶⁶"The Turnip Day Session," Time, July 26, 1948, p. 14.

squarely on the line of fire. It focused attention on issues--housing, inflation, and civil rights--important to Americans and calculated to arouse their ire. The GOP had to produce effective legislation in order to win the confidence of the American public. "In 1948 Americans were alert and politically wise," consequently it behooved "both parties in the special session to subordinate politics to service on behalf of America's needs."⁶⁷ The problem of the GOP was real. How were they going to do it without helping Truman?

If they adjourned the session as soon as it met--which some Republicans advocated--the GOP would be considered too negative. If the party passed constructive legislation Truman would get the credit. "Only one response remained: listen to Truman's demands, denounce them as politically inspired, enact a few measures to combat prices, and go home as soon as possible."⁶⁸ This they did.

Angered and frustrated by their position, however, the GOP continued to rail against it. "Mr. Truman challenged Congress to accomplish in 15 days what the Democratic Party had failed to do in 15 years," said Representative George H. Bender of Ohio. "Now of course our President did not believe this would be done."⁶⁹ (This was true.) "He is a realistic politician, and he is playing what some people mistakenly believe to be smart politics."⁷⁰ (This was false. It was smart politics.)

⁶⁷Michael Straight, p. 7.

⁶⁸James T. Patterson, Mr. Republican (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1972), p. 420.

⁶⁹George H. Bender, in Appendix to the Congressional Record, August 7, 1948, p. A5285.

⁷⁰Ibid.

Eleanor Roosevelt, less impressed by the histrionics of the situation, defended Truman's decision to call the special session. She stated that it was unimportant whether he recalled Congress for political motives or not. Work had been left undone, and this was important. Said Mrs. Roosevelt, "It must have taken courage for the President to appear before this Republican-dominated Congress in person...So, it would seem that he really has a sense that certain things are of paramount importance--important enough to tell them to Congress face to face."⁷¹

The two-week session proved fruitless. The only constructive piece of legislation to pass Congress was a \$65 million loan for the construction of the UN building and "some curbs on consumer and bank credit." The reluctant "turnip planters" deliberately blocked all other effective legislation. Their attitude was typified by Herbert Brownell, Jr., when he said: "The Republican platform calls for the enactment of a program by a Republican Congress under the leadership of a Republican President. Obviously this cannot be done at a rump session...."⁷² He should have added, and won't be done at a rump session.

By deliberately bringing up the issues of anti-poll tax, anti-lynching and anti-discrimination, the GOP hoped to provoke a filibuster by Southern Democrats which would distract attention from Truman's demands on Congress and sow dissension in the Democratic ranks.⁷³ They

⁷¹Melvin Price, citing Eleanor Roosevelt, in Appendix to the Congressional Record, August 4, 1948, p. A4842.

⁷²"Session Strategy," Newsweek, August 2, 1948, p. 16.

⁷³Ibid.

succeeded. Newsweek, which described the filibuster as the strangest in history, said "There was no ranting, no raving, no horseplay, no preaching on white supremacy."⁷⁴ However, the remarks entered in the Congressional Record clearly reveal the issue of "white supremacy," and demonstrate the unreasonable fears, unabashed bigotry and ignorance of the members of Congress. The following remarks made by William Lewis of Kentucky sadly testify to the existing discrimination. Here are his words:

I have absolutely no prejudice against the Negro race...but I am opposed to Negro children and white children attending the same schools, using the same playgrounds and recreational centers.

The succeeding pathetic remark warrants no comment. Lewis continued:

In traveling by train I believe the Negroes should ride, sleep, and eat in separate coaches from the white people. Imagine, if you please, a colored man sleeping in a lower berth in the same coach just opposite a white woman in easy arm's reach of each other. Does not such tend to encourage amalgamation of the races?⁷⁵

And Representative W.M. Wheeler of Georgia had this to say about the civil rights program:

In spite of all the hypocritical statements to the contrary, there is no gainsaying the fact that the pushing of the civil-rights program has and will continue to hurt the Negro in this country. The Negroes themselves do not want the civil-rights program.⁷⁶

By what circuitous path Wheeler arrived at this conclusion is unknown. But what is known is that the Southerners knew they could curb

⁷⁴"Pardon My Filibuster," Newsweek, August 9, 1948, p. 17.

⁷⁵William Lewis, in the Appendix to the Congressional Record, August 5, 1948, p. 4887.

⁷⁶William Wheeler, in the Appendix to the Congressional Record, August 6, 1948, p. A4974.

any legislation on civil rights during the Turnip Session, and did.

Truman himself had forewarned the nation that the Republicans would do nothing, but he had insisted he was going to call their "bluff." He justified his stance by saying the American people should be made aware of the Republicans' calloused indifference to their needs.⁷⁷ The methods employed by the GOP at the Turnip Session verified Truman's position. As far as the President was concerned, the special session had exceeded his expectations. After Congress adjourned, he took the occasion to denounce it as the "worst" Congress ever assembled. His weapon for the forthcoming campaign had been effectively honed.

On Saturday, July 17, the States' Rights convention was held at Birmingham, Alabama. But it was a divided South that struggled for political realignment. With the exception of the Alabama, Mississippi and South Carolina contingent who had bolted from the Democratic National Convention in Philadelphia, the delegates were composed primarily of "political outs and political has-beens."⁷⁸ In fact, the absence of the most important Southern leaders like Herman Talmadge of Georgia, Governor Ben Laney of Arkansas and Senator Byrd of Virginia, to name a few, was noticeable.

The defection of the Southern delegates from the Philadelphia convention was viewed with sorrow by many in the South. According to Jules Abels, the Atlanta Journal mourned the split in the party over an issue

⁷⁷Truman, Memoirs, II, 208.

⁷⁸"Tumult in Dixie," Time, July 26, 1948, p. 15.

which they felt could have easily been adjusted.⁷⁹ Even within the three states of Alabama, Mississippi and South Carolina, factions were fighting for control. Only in Mississippi were the majority for the break. In Alabama and South Carolina a considerable number opposed the rift. And from the states of Georgia, North Carolina, Virginia, Tennessee, Florida, Texas, and Louisiana, there was little or no official representation at Birmingham.⁸⁰

Nevertheless, what the rebellious delegates lacked in political prestige, they made up for in unbridled enthusiasm. Congregating in Birmingham's red-brick municipal auditorium for their one day convention, the Dixiecrats shouted rebel yells and snake-danced under a portrait of Robert E. Lee. The spectacle warmed the cockles of "Alfalfa Bill" Murray's heart. Sitting in the front row of the convention hall, Oklahoma's "doddering" ex-Governor proudly proclaimed, "I'm the man who introduced Jim Crow in Oklahoma."⁸¹

The keynote address was delivered by the former Governor of Alabama, Frank M. Dixon. His message, cloaked in typical Southern rhetoric, was greeted with tumultuous applause. Castigating the civil rights program of the Democratic Party, Dixon challenged: "The South will fight the attempt to mongrelize our people."⁸²

⁷⁹Cut of the Jaws of Victory (New York: Henry Holt, 1959), p. 96.

⁸⁰"Two Party Headway in South," U.S. News, July 30, 1948, p. 22.

⁸¹"Tumult in Dixie," p. 15.

⁸²"War Between the Democrats," Newsweek, July 26, 1948, p. 21.

Longing to believe they could turn back the clock of time, the delegates screamed in a frenzy of wild hope, "We want Dixon," "Dixie wants Dixon," and "To hell with Truman." The demonstration lasted for twenty minutes. Then the Dixicrats unanimously chose Governor J. Strom Thurmond of South Carolina for President and Governor Fielding L. Wright of Mississippi for the vice-president. The two standard-bearers adopted for their platform the declaration: "We stand for the segregation of the races and the racial integrity of each race."⁸³

Suffering from no illusions that they would win, the Dixiecrats sought only to keep the South's electoral votes from going to Truman or Dewey. They reasoned that if no presidential candidate received the majority of votes required to win, the election would then be thrown into the House of Representatives where the South would hold the balance of power. In this event, Thurmond might have a chance.⁸⁴ "As Senator James Eastland of Mississippi expressed it, 'Northern Democrats would still prefer a Southern Democrat to a Republican, and Republicans would prefer a Southern Democrat to a Northern one.'⁸⁵ Furthermore, the South would be able to "barter for legislation to help them maintain the old way of living...."⁸⁶ Emile B. Ader contended, "The plan was far-fetched but not impossible of implementation."⁸⁷ However, most agreed their chances for achieving this goal were remote.

⁸²"War Between the Democrats," Newsweek, July 26, 1948, p. 21.

⁸³Ibid.

⁸⁴Emile Ader, "Why the Dixicrats Failed," The Journal of Politics, August, 1953, p. 357.

⁸⁵Ibid.

⁸⁶"Two Party Headway," p. 22.

⁸⁷Ader, p. 357.

CHAPTER VI

THIRD PARTY CHALLENGE

WALLACE--SAUL OR PAUL?

Henry Agard Wallace was, and still remains, a conundrum. The ex-vice-president and leader of the Progressive Party was viewed by some as a prophet of freedom and by others as a misguided zealot for communist ideology. Wallace nevertheless had a substantial following during the 1944 Democratic Convention. So much so, in fact, he nearly captured the prize which would have sent him to the White House in 1945 instead of Harry S. Truman. According to Margaret Truman, Wallace's popularity was so evident that "Even the convention hall organist capitulated to the Wallace crowd and played 'Iowa, That's Where the Tall Corn Grows,' the Iowa state song, so many times that it's a wonder his fingers didn't sprout kernels."¹ In spite of the gallery's enthusiasm for Wallace, the final count was 1031 for Truman and 105 for Wallace. The fight had been a difficult one. On the first ballot the count for Wallace was 429½ and 319½ for Truman. Judging from the pandemonium in the convention hall, Truman's victory had not been easily attained. The ultimate result, however, was not just a new vice-president but the alienation of a former New Dealer. Wallace was deeply resentful that he had been removed as F.D.R.'s successor. The disavowal gave impetus to his crusade

¹Margaret Truman, Harry S. Truman (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1973), p. 178.

which some felt was not so much a conquering as a punitive expedition.²

Karl M. Schmidt gives the following reasons for Wallace's defeat.*

The party bosses--the machines, and the conservatives of the South could not stand Mr. Wallace who in the popular mind embodied the New Deal and racial equality. So they turned to the colorless Truman who has never upset anyone's prejudices.³

There is a modicum of truth in Schmidt's statement. Wallace did disaffect the South by his insistence on racial equality, but so did Truman as evidenced by the formation of the Dixiecrats. The party bosses--Edward J. Kelley, Edward J. Flynn, Edwin W. Pauley, George Allen, Frank Walker and Robert Hannegan--did repudiate Wallace, but again for reasons consistent with their idea of freedom. But Schmidt would have been wiser in using an adjective for Truman other than "colorless" because this was one appellation that definitely did not fit the man.

The few biographies written about Wallace have been penned by men who felt an affinity for the "crusader" and consequently have rationalized away every flaw and defect in the man and in his inability to head a successful campaign. Whereby, some of the factors attributed to his defeat are rapidly acceptable, others have an aura of unreality about them. On the other hand, the press frequently veered in the opposite direction and castigated the man unmercifully. But it is interesting to note that

²William Harlan Hale, "What Makes Wallace Run?," Harper's, March, 1948, p. 242.

*Schmidt, a devotee of Wallace's and a one time leader of a student group at Colgate University, New York, for "Republicans for Wallace," is an admittedly biased witness.

³Henry A. Wallace: Quixotic Crusade, 1948 (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1960), p. 4.

whether they were for or against him, all writers seemed to exempt Wallace from any but the purest motives in his projected plans for America. Perhaps if Wallace had not had a penchant for quoting from the Bible people would have been less ambiguous in their evaluation of him and not quite so awed by this supernatural interest.

There seems to exist a generally accepted view that Wallace was totally selfless in his approach to politics; that he exuded a prophetic, Jeremiah-like message from God. "Like Saint Paul after Damascus it became an obsession with him to preach the gospel of peace and goodwill to all men. He was a man driven by conscience and conviction, so much so that his concern for political realities was often obscured by the cause itself...Wallace was a paragon of virtue."⁴ He is portrayed as quixotic yet sincere, Christian but naive. Perhaps this is true. However, one might rightfully question the altruistic motives imputed to Wallace. After all, being able to quote from the Bible does not automatically transform an individual into a Christian. Many a dedicated apostle of retribution has been well-versed in the Mosaic law. Is it not possible that under a missionary type of zeal, Wallace attempted to foist his will onto an unwilling populace under the mistaken notion that his way was the right way? To anthropomorphize Christ and his teachings is not new. Wallace's statement, "I believe in God, I believe in progressive capitalism,"⁵ raises the question, which God? and what form of capitalism? Rather than proclaiming himself the messiah and rejoicing in

⁴Edward L. and Frederick H. Schapsmeier, Prophet in Politics (Iowa: Iowa State University, 1970), p. 163.

⁵Schmidt, p. 45.

the eggs thrown at his head while campaigning, it would be more to the point to mention his intolerance of the four C's: communism, Catholicism,* capitalism and colonialism.⁶ Furthermore, since he was aligned in philosophical theory with many of his contemporaries, would it not have been possible to contribute to the betterment of the nation by working within the system? He knew he was doomed to failure if he formed a third party. Hence why continue on a course which could only sow discord and confusion? Was it for the purpose of self-aggrandizement and stubborn adherence to his own ideas? Or was it to voice an alternative to the foreign policy of the United States?

The creation of a third party had apparently been festering in the minds of a number of people and organizations for a long time. Vito Marcantonio claims to have seen the need for a devil's advocate in the American political structure since the thirties. He had hoped for a Farmer-Labor party to contend with the Democrats and Republicans in 1940. By 1946 he viewed the creation of a third party as a "political necessity" since there appeared to be no difference between the major parties.⁷

Eugene Dennis was another advocate of a third party in America. Speaking at a meeting of the Communist Party in 1945 he said, "The American people must have an alternative to the two-party strait-jacket;

*There seems to be disagreement on this point of intolerance. According to an article in Time Wallace thought of becoming a Catholic before he joined the Episcopal Church.

⁶Schmidt, p. 48.

⁷Alan Schaffer, Vito Marcantonio (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1966), p. 182.

they must be in a position to have a choice in 1948 other than between a Truman and a Dewey or a Vandenberg."⁸ He saw the basis of the third party in the blacks, labor unions and progressives such as Wallace.

While the climate for innovation was being created by such men as Marcantonio and Dennis, Wallace himself still remained within the ranks of the Democratic Party. Although he had lost the vice-presidential election he nevertheless received the appointment as Secretary of Commerce*--albeit with some of the authority taken away. Curtis MacDougall, claims Wallace received the nomination because of his loyalty to F.D.R. "Grace Tully and Samuel Rosenman have opined that getting Jesse Jones out of the cabinet was more in Roosevelt's mind than getting Henry Wallace in; the reason being that F.D.R. was convinced...Jones opposed his third and fourth terms."⁹ In any event, Wallace still maintained a position of some importance in the vortex of political life.

However, on September 12, 1946, Wallace gave a speech at Madison Square Garden in which he denounced U.S. foreign policy. (The speech had been read and approved by Truman.) The repercussions were swift and leveling. Actually, by the standards of 1974, the speech was mild. But in the light of Russia's aggressive actions in the forties the speech was consid-

⁸David Shannon, The Decline of American Communism (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1959), p. 114.

*Wallace's confirmation as Secretary of Commerce passed only because of a compromise. The Federal Loan Administration was removed from the Commerce Department jurisdiction. Fred Vinson was appointed and confirmed as the new Federal Loan Administrator thereby stripping Wallace of authority over lending agencies.

⁹Gideon's Army, 2 vols. (New York: Marzanin and Munsell, 1965), I, 12.

ered unpatriotic and uncalled for. Here are a few excerpts from the talk:

(Domestic issue)

First we have prejudice, hatred, fear and ignorance of certain races. The recent mass lynching in Georgia was not merely the most unwarranted brutal act of mob violence in the United States in recent years; it was also an illustration of the kind of prejudice that makes war inevitable.

(Foreign issue)

We most earnestly want peace with Russia...but we want to be met halfway. We want cooperation. And I believe that we can get cooperation once Russia understands that our primary objective is neither saving the British Empire nor purchasing oil in the Near East with the lives of American soldiers.

But whether we like it or not, the Russians will try to socialize their sphere of influence...¹⁰

The really unfortunate part of Wallace's speech was the timing. Secretary of State James Byrnes was in Paris attempting to outline America's position in foreign affairs. The speech did not agree with U.S. policy hence it placed Byrnes in an untenable position. The Secretary of State was staggered by the implications of Wallace's speech and rendered an ultimatum to Truman. Apparently it was an either-or threat. Wallace resigned. According to Truman in his Memoirs, Byrnes offered to resign if it would help Truman in his policies. However, Truman responded by telling "Byrnes he was doing an excellent job and that he would continue to support him."¹¹

It was foreign policy then, not domestic issues, that caused the permanent rupture between Wallace and his former colleagues. He moved to a farm in New York after his dismissal where he eagerly plunged back into scientific farming and journalism. His dissident views were to con-

¹⁰MacDougall, pp. 65-66.

¹¹Harry S. Truman, Memoirs, 2 vols. (New York: Doubleday and Company, 1956), 559.

tinue reaching the public as he took over the editorship of the New Republic. Here he was able to express himself unfettered by the annoying shackles of diplomatic protocol.

Typical of his editorials was one which appeared in the February 1947 issue. In this article Wallace castigated the United States for its unwillingness to share atomic secrets. "What one fool can do, another can...We can realize that we never had a secret, or if we did have one temporarily, it is no longer ours." Though time was certainly to prove Wallace correct when he said, "we are clutching...a secret that is not a secret,"¹² nevertheless his pharisaical air irked Congress. In August of 1948, when Wallace was actively running for the presidency, Norris Poulson of California stated in simple terms the antagonism registered towards Wallace's attitude. He said, "Candidate Wallace talks about peace with Russia as if he and his followers are the only ones who are for it."¹³ Perhaps this attitude more than anything else galled Americans.

Although the New Republic doubled in circulation when Wallace joined the staff his interest in the magazine was short-lived. "At this stage in his career, Wallace found weekly journalism too confining...He rarely read through the magazine, took little interest in the editors, frequently forgot their names."¹⁴ However, his interest in and desire for politics had not deserted him. Wallace automatically gravitated to-

¹²Henry Wallace, "Whose Atomic Secret?" New Republic, February 17, 1947, p. 26.

¹³Norris Poulson, in the Appendix to the Congressional Record, August 7, 1948, p. A5220.

¹⁴Irwin Ross, The Loneliest Campaign. (New York: New American Library, 1968), p. 145.

wards the political arena. Though a Democrat in name, he was gradually surrounded by communist and non-communist sympathizers who saw the hero they needed in order to form a third party.

Encouraged by such diverse people as "Beanie" Baldwin, a former member of the Department of Agriculture; Harold Ickes, Roosevelt's Secretary of the Interior; Philip Murray, CIO president; Mrs. Anita McCormick Blaine, daughter of Cyrus McCormick and liberal philanthropist; et al., Wallace began to see himself more and more in the role of peacemaker. There seems to be little doubt that without the constant support from this coterie of enthusiasts (Murray and Ickes withdrew their support) Wallace would not have sought an independent role within the political structure.

The PCA, Progressive Citizens of America, was particularly influential in starting the drive for a third party. The NC-PAC and the ICC-ASP, respectively known as the National Citizens Political Action Committee and the Independent Citizens Committee of the Arts, Sciences and Professions, had merged to form the PCA which in turn eventually became the nucleus of the Progressive Party. Unfortunately for Wallace the base of the movement became dominated by a hard core of left-wing radicals. The strong Communist influence caused many liberals to cut themselves off from the group and form one of their own. Thus the ADA came into existence.

Unlike the PCA, the Americans for Democratic Action supported the two-party system and excluded Communists from their group. Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt, Walter Reuther, and Chester Bowles were just a few of the famous names in this liberal association. Their function was primarily one

of constructive dissent. Though they disagreed with Truman in many of his domestic policies the ADA was nonetheless careful in criticizing foreign policy. Like so many others, fear of Communist domination of the United States loomed large and horrifying.

While the advocates of the third party jockeyed for the support of labor leaders and left-wing liberals, Wallace toured Western Europe making a series of condemnatory speeches about United States policy. He assailed the Truman Doctrine and fulminated against the stockpiling of atomic bombs, insisting they be destroyed. His activities created such a furor, Congressman J. Parnell Thomas urged Wallace be indicted under the Logan Act of 1799 for engaging in activities contrary to the national welfare of the United States. Nothing was done about this suggestion. But even prior to Wallace's departure for Europe it was recommended by Forrestal at a Cabinet meeting that Wallace's passport be revoked. Truman objected to the idea and, in fact, extended the "olive branch" to both Wallace and Claude Pepper, the recalcitrant rebels of the Democratic party via a national radio broadcast.

Senator Claude Pepper's comment to the press concerning Truman's overture was as follows: "The President certainly was right. I have been in the Democratic party...for a long time and I have no idea of getting out of it. We Democrats differ with each other...but we don't leave the ancestral home."¹⁵

Wallace's comment, however, was as esoteric as usual when he was interviewed in London. "I shall be campaigning in 1948 with all my power,

¹⁵MacDougall, p. 134.

but I will be campaigning for the ideals of the free world and the men who best express these ideals. I hope, but I cannot guarantee, that they will be on the Democratic ticket."¹⁶ Once again, we hear the oft repeated statement that he was a Democrat and wished to remain one as long as the party held itself aloof from corruption and adhered to Christian ideals consistent with his world view. Time would tell if any party was pure enough for Henry Agard Wallace.

In May, after his return from Europe, Wallace toured the United States, speaking to nearly a quarter million Americans. His trip was sponsored by the New Republic and the PCA. The speaking engagements were enormously successful. The format, much like his presidential campaign, was theatrical, obvious, and entertaining. The tour served a double purpose. It kept Wallace before the public eye, and what was even more important to Wallace, it gave him the sounding board he needed to continue to harangue the people about the issue of peace. By this time his anti-war stance had reached such a stage that, "He must paint America's political rulers as unrelieved black, thereby letting the opponents of those rulers stand out in white."¹⁷ When asked why he never said anything critical about Soviet policies, Wallace answered, "He didn't see how by himself he could affect Soviet policies...But he could affect American policies, ergo, criticism must stay at home."¹⁸

According to Jules Abels Wallace finally admitted in 1949 that the

¹⁶MacDougall, p. 134.

¹⁷Hale, p. 247.

¹⁸Ibid. p. 247.

Communists had taken over the Progressive Party. It was at this time that he severed all affiliation with them. But, in spite of this, he still rejected the charges that individuals within his party had communistic leanings.¹⁹ Why the blind spot? No one knows. But he perpetuated his self-deceit unflinchingly. "He blamed U.S. Ambassador Laurence Steinhardt and U.S. policy for the Communist coup in Czechoslovakia," and referred to Jan Masaryk's suicide by casually saying "Maybe he had cancer... His way of solving the Berlin crisis was to give Berlin to the Russians."²⁰ And so it went. With such an exaggerated propensity to paint the U.S. in Machiavellian tones, it should be no surprise that Wallace withdrew from the Democratic Party and announced his intention to run for the presidency under the aegis of the New Party.*

The mixup of Wallace's formal announcement concerning his candidacy, symbolized to a staff writer of the New Republic the ineptness of the Wallace machine. On December 29, 1947, several hours before Wallace's radio broadcast, Robert W. Kenny, co-chairman of the PCA, released news of Wallace's decision to run hours before Wallace came on the air.²¹

Though some may see in this first misstep an omen of impending

¹⁹Jules Abels, Cut of the Jaws of Victory (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1959), p. 109.

²⁰"Iowa Hybrid," Time, August 9, 1948, p. 19.

*"From the first Wallace had called it the 'New Party'. The delegates were asked to approve 'Progressive Party' and they did so with unbridled enthusiasm." ("Behind the Wallace Scenes," Newsweek, August 2, 1948, p. 18.)

²¹Hale, p. 241.

doom, such an interpretation of the event verges on the superstitious. Equally careless blunders had been committed by Truman's and Dewey's cohorts without lasting damage. However, it had been acknowledged by no less than Wallace himself that he definitely lacked political acumen. He was just not interested in political organization and was willing to leave all party maneuvering to chance, his friends, or even to strangers.²² His eye was always cast on some mystical horizon. Consequently, it was in keeping with his personality when he concluded his opening address for the presidency in the following terms.

We have assembled a Gideon's Army, small in number, powerful in conviction, ready for action. We have said with Gideon, "Let those who are fearful and trembling depart." For every fearful one who leaves, there will be a thousand to take his place. A just cause is worth a hundred armies. We face the future unfettered, unfettered by any principle but the general welfare. We owe no allegiance to any group which does not serve that welfare. By God's grace, the people's peace will usher in the century of the common man.²³

As might have been expected, the reactions to Wallace's announcement varied from the critical, to the delighted, to the indifferent. The dominant opinion was that Wallace's candidacy would split the Democratic vote and thereby ensure a Republican victory. Others felt it would spell defeat for liberal legislative objectives. David Lawrence, a nationally known columnist said the action was "relatively inconsequential in a political sense," and warned, "Republicans who think it is going to draw any large number of Democratic votes from Truman may be exulting a bit prematurely."²⁴ President Truman made no comment at all. Gideon's army

²²Schmidt, p. 52.

²³"I Shall Run in 1948," Vital Speeches, January 1, 1948, p. 173.

²⁴MacDougall, II, 283.

was on the march.

Once the wheels of the New Party had been set in motion, attention was immediately focused on the choice of a vice-presidential candidate. The selection of a running mate for Wallace was restricted for a number of reasons. Since no one expected Wallace to win, few men of prominence were willing to jeopardize their careers for a one night stand. Although Senator Claude Pepper's name had been bandied about as a prospective candidate this avenue was automatically closed when he refused to leave the Democratic Party. It has been intimated that his wife had a great deal to do with his decision.²⁵

O. John Rooge, a lawyer from New York, was not seriously considered for the position even though he wanted it because he was from the same state as Wallace. Furthermore, he was not well-known. And apparently, Dr. Rexford Guy Tugwell, onetime Roosevelt brain-truster, was disqualified before he could shake his silver-haired head no. It was Glen Taylor they wished to pocket for the job. He had seemingly always been the party's choice for filling the vice-presidential slot.²⁶

Taylor appears a somewhat tragic figure in this crusade for "peace, prosperity, and freedom." Unlike Wallace he had had few advantages in life. Neither education nor money had been doled out to him. At fifteen, the sum total of his formal education had come to an end. For years after that Glen Taylor's life consisted of a series of bookings in cheap theatres. This is where he gained the title "singing cowboy." Frequently he slept in a truck and ate jack rabbit for dinner. And all the while he lived

²⁵MacDougall, II, 307.

²⁶Schmidt, pp. 41-42.

this itinerant existence, he read and studied. With his background of experience it should not be surprising that his political philosophy coincided with the New Deal. He was a man of the depression era who had known suffering and out of his suffering arrived at a liberal point of view comparable to Wallace's. But the road which led him to this quixotic partnership was long, twisting and diverse. And the campaign of 1948 was for him his swan song in political life. Wallace could afford to be chivalrous, Taylor could not.

Taylor's entry into politics was a direct result of his theatrical experiences. Having witnessed a gubernatorial campaign he decided politicians and actors had a lot in common. "He reasoned, 'They're little more than amateurs who spend only part of their time before audiences. Why shouldn't I, a full-time professional performer, be able to do as good or better a job?'"²⁷ Whether his reasoning was correct is inconsequential. The important point is that he acted on his assumption.

It took him from 1938 to 1944 to win an election. Since he accomplished the feat without benefit of help from the Democratic Party in Idaho, he operated as an individual agent. Taylor felt no compunction to curry favor. His voting record was almost unanimous in support of New Deal measures. It had been estimated that he voted "pro-Administration" ninety-four percent of the time.²⁸

Although the high percentage of votes cast for Democratic legislation would indicate an almost slavish loyalty to the party, apparently

²⁷Schmidt, p. 57.

²⁸MacDougall, II, 308.

the opposite was true. The Senator sincerely felt the Democratic Party was the party of the people. However, as the Truman era and the entrance into the cold war became a reality Taylor decided the United States was becoming a militaristic nation and like Wallace defected from a political machine which he thought was wrong. His decision to accept the vice-presidential candidacy, nevertheless, had not been an easy choice for him to make. It meant political suicide. As he himself admitted, his senatorial position had been the best job he had ever had. Yet, in spite of the danger to his career he joined Wallace's third party and started on the disastrous road to oblivion.

Thus, two men, like-minded in their political views, yet diametrically opposed in their personalities and background, forged a New Party for a better world. "The difference," according to Helen Fuller of the New Republic was, "that Wallace Progressives demand the better world right now; the Democrats will settle for getting it soon; the Republicans think they had it twenty years ago; the Dixiecrats want just what they had a full century back."²⁹ Armed with belief in a "better world" and coupled with the moral conviction of their rightness, Wallace and Taylor plunged ahead into their campaign for peace.

One of the immediate problems confronting the New Party was the matter of getting on the ballots of the forty-eight states. In order to give the American people a "choice," the organizational footwork had to be completed before the filing deadlines which varied from state to state. The work involved in accomplishing this task ranged from the heroic to the

²⁹Helen Fuller, "For a Better World Right Now," New Republic, August 2, 1948, pp. 11-13.

absurd. The legal requirements in some states created an almost insurmountable obstacle. More than one state required nominating petitions; others required nomination by convention; some required only formal organization and filing of a slate of electors; and in South Carolina the only requirement was to print and distribute ballots at the polling places. These various legal barriers, added to the pressure of forming a third party organizational structure in some states, complicated matters for Wallace.

New York and California, however, were exceptions. Due to Vito Marcantonio's American Labor Party Wallace was assured of having his name appear on the ballot in New York. And California had been delivered to Wallace with the help of Hugh Bryson and other active groups who got 15,000 more valid signatures than were necessary. In Nebraska, on the other hand, his partisans failed to meet the requirements. All that was needed was that 750 delegates sign a new party filing petition. Apparently devotion to the cause was lacking because only 283 delegates showed up. The Wallaceites lost Nebraska by default. However, it would be unfair to consider Nebraska the norm. In the majority of cases the New Party encountered unreasonable opposition, if not outright hostility. In Illinois, Oklahoma and Ohio* the attempts made to keep Wallace off the ballot verged on the extreme. The fear of communist infiltration in government introduced bizarre elements into the struggle. In some instances, petition solicitors were stopped by the police and searched.³⁰ The press

*In Ohio the Progressive electors were on the ballot without party designation. Citizens were required to make 25 X's to cast a vote for Wallace. Thus Ohio was rigged so that it would be almost impossible for Wallace to win.

³⁰MacDougall, II, 436.

bombarded the public with the "Red" menace and occasionally the Wallaceites were beaten. In spite of this antagonism the third party managed to get on the ballot of forty-five states*--the party did not qualify in Illinois, Oklahoma and Nebraska.³¹

An interesting aside in the battle of the ballots was the mutual aid extended between the Dixiecrats and the Progressives. Although the two parties were totally opposed in their civil rights views they were forced to accommodate one another in order to get on the ballot and cripple the Democratic Party. A mutual foe had caused two alien factions to join hands.

In order to conduct a nationwide campaign it takes more than enthusiasm and getting on the ballot, it takes money. From the very beginning, this problem did not cause any major obstacle to Wallace's campaign. Not only did he have the financial assistance of many well-heeled friends**--Frederick Vanderbilt Field, Dan S. Gilmore, Lillian Hellman and, of course, Mrs. Anita McCormick Blaine, to name just a few--he amassed large contributions from fund raising techniques employed at political rallies. Reporters were aghast at the tactics so blatantly used to enlarge the New Party treasury. According to eye witness reports, the rallies resembled an old time revival meeting. Newsmen were "dazzled by the willingness of

³¹"Running Down," Newsweek, November 1, 1948, p. 26.

*There is a discrepancy on the number of states on which Wallace's name appeared. Some authors list only 44 states in their final tally.

**It is interesting to note that Wallace contributed only \$1,000 to the campaign in spite of the fact that he was independently wealthy. (Schmidt, p. 158.)

crowds not only to pay admission to hear Wallace but to empty their pockets for his cause once they were inside the hall."³²

William Gailmor,* "A suave, fast-talking New Yorker who had been an Orthodox rabbi before becoming a radio commentator,"³³ was primarily responsible for the successful financing of the party. The road shows followed a regular format. First there was the invocation, the singing of the national anthem, the warm-up speeches generally followed by a famous entertainer like Paul Robeson, and then Bill Gailmor, show-man par excellence. According to Cabell Phillips, Gailmor was a master pitchman. He had the ability to work the crowd into a frenzy of devotion and then climaxed his appeal by asking for money.³⁴ The following excerpt is typical of Gailmor's oratorical approach:

Show Henry Wallace, who's waiting just behind that door there to come out and talk to you, that you are really behind him. Everybody reach into your pocket and pocketbook and pull out a dollar bill. Just a plain dollar bill. Just a plain ordinary buck that you might spend for a beer on the way home tonight. Wave it in the air so we can see it. That's the stuff! Fine! E-e-everybody!...Okay, ushers, grab 'em quick before they change their minds....!"³⁵

³²Irwin Ross, The Loneliest Campaign (New York: New American Library, 1968), p. 154.

*William Margolis, later known as William Gailmor, had been a rabbi until a compulsive neurosis drove him to seek medical treatment. He stole cars and drove them at breakneck speed. When he was arrested, instead of a jail sentence, he sought medical help. After the 1948 campaign he wrote a column on mental hygiene for the New York Daily Compass. (MacDougall, II, 380.)

³³Ross, p. 154.

³⁴The Truman Presidency (New York: MacMillan Company, 1966), p. 204.

³⁵MacDougall, II, 379.

As carnival-like as these proceedings may have appeared they were highly successful judging from the final figures in the party treasury. On October 22, 1948, the New York Times stated that the Progressive Party was in the red. However, on the following day in the same paper, Ralph Shikes, Wallace's public relations director, stated, "The Washington writers apparently obtained their result by subtracting the \$772,607 in contributions listed by the Wallace forces from the listed \$1,092,377 in expenditures to October 18. They had overlooked, he said, a third figure reported to the Clerk of the House of Representatives...\$327,295 listed as 'refund on expenditures.' Mr. Shikes said that money raised at public meetings from ticket sales and general collections was not included in the contributions report, but as 'refunds' against the expenses meetings."³⁶ Thus the Party was not in the "red" but clearly free of all debt. And according to Table 2 in the appendix in Schmidt's Quixotic Crusade there was a surplus of \$20,176.58 at the end of the 1948 campaign.

Not everyone fared this well. In the same edition of the New York Times, the CIO's Political Action Committee admitted they were \$71,788 in the red. The PAC was backing Truman.

Clearly, finances did not hamper the Wallace party. The "paid-admission, voluntary-contribution rally" remained in use to the end of the campaign so successful was it in soliciting money.

"When the old parties rot, the people have a right to be heard through a New Party."³⁷ Thus spoke Wallace in explaining his rationale for cre-

³⁶ News items in the New York Times, October 23 and 24, 1948.

³⁷ "I Shall Run in 1948," Vital Speeches, January 1, 1948, p. 173.

ating a third party. And on another occasion he said, "The basic political reality in the United States today is one-party rule. There is no real difference between the Democratic and Republican parties on the important issues confronting the American people."³⁸ Whether this was an outgrowth of his thinking or a deliberate device used to advance his political views is uncertain, but it was the basis of his strategy used in his campaigns.³⁹ How accurate was Wallace's comparison between the Progressives and the Democrats? Were the distinctions as clear as he believed or was Wallace merely engaging in verbal brickbats?

According to a July article in the New Republic, the program of the New Party on domestic issues was on record for, "the complete abolition of segregation and discrimination; continued price support for farmers; broadened social security...and the nationalization of the railroads and aircraft industry."⁴⁰ On the international scene the platform could be capsulized by saying the U.S. would adopt an attitude of friendship toward the Soviet Union.

The unfortunate part of Wallace's domestic program was that it did not differ from the Democrats in any substantial way save for nationalization of industries. In fact, the civil rights issue had become important to all the parties, whether they wanted it to or not. That Wallace chose it as a dramatic political gambit, declaring himself the father of

³⁸ Henry A. Wallace, "Why a Third Party in 1948?" Annals of the American Academy, September, 1948, p. 10.

³⁹ Roy V. Peel, "The 1948 Preconvention Campaign," Ibid., p. 78.

⁴⁰ "The New Party's Future," New Republic, July 26, 1948, p. 18.

humaneness, caused skepticism in his opponents.

In September, 1948, Norman Thomas delivered a speech in Buffalo, New York, in which he said, "I must confess also to an excusable irritation at reading Henry Wallace's boasts that he, a Presidential candidate, for the first time...held non-segregated meetings in a political campaign in the South. We Socialists have repeatedly done that very thing without, perhaps unfortunately, the publicity Mr. Wallace has received."⁴¹

Norman Thomas, however, was not alone in his disdain for the biblical firebrand. Jules Abels relates a story which took place in the Washington National Airport. George Weaver, a black, had apparently been denied a service at the airport and when he appealed to Wallace for help, Wallace replied he was bound by Virginia law. It was Averill Harriman who put a stop to the discrimination.⁴² Abels recites a number of other incidents dredged up by the Democratic party citing Wallace's prejudice. Whether these stories have all been documented for their authenticity is a moot point. But that Wallace used the racist issue for a grandstand play seems fairly certain.

Eggs, tomatoes, peaches, lemons and other assorted objects thrown at Wallace have been counted ad nauseum.* The litany of the barrage would stock the neighborhood grocery. Yet the onslaught seemed only to

⁴²Abels, p. 208.

*"A reported total of 130 eggs, tomatoes and other missiles were thrown during the presidential campaign (not including the final week.) Of these 84 eggs, 40 tomatoes, 4 peaches, 2 lemons, 1 orange and 1 bun were aimed at Henry Wallace...One egg and 5 tomatoes were thrown at Governor Thomas E. Dewey. No hits. One pop bottle was thrown at President Harry Truman during his parade in Indianapolis. It landed in the street, 35 feet away." (Time, November 1, 1948, p. 21.)

stimulate Wallace to seek an even more diverse assortment of produce. Self-righteously jubilant after the riot in North Carolina, Clark Foreman, the Progressive Party Treasurer said, "This is what we want."⁴³ And perhaps it was what they wanted. Yet Wallace later admitted that his trek down south may not have been the most prudent move to make. "A dozen Negroes in Birmingham, Alabama, picketed a Wallace audience with placards reading, 'The colored people want education no agitation'...Tuskegee Institute is the largest Negro college in the world. An Alabama institution, not Moscow...."⁴⁴

As deplorable as the crowds acted during Wallace's southern invasion, it is possible that he found the news coverage desirable. According to a number of writers, the thrust of the Wallace movement had lost a great deal of its force. The international scene had dealt Wallace a sustaining blow. As he and Taylor rampaged across the country in a pre-convention campaign preaching co-existence with Russia, Czechoslovakia was taken over. This obvious act of aggression on the part of the Communists did little to enhance Wallace's image with the American public. The successful coup, plus the handling of the Palestine problem by Truman further weakened Wallace's program. And to compound his problems he wrote an open letter to Stalin in May which antagonized the populace. These events caused a number of defections in the Wallace ranks. Many hitherto pacifists were rapidly becoming disabused of their utopian dreams of living at peace with the Soviet Union, ergo, it was important for Wallace to focus on domestic issues like the civil rights movement.

⁴³"Wallace and Grandstand," Newsweek, September 13, 1948, p. 25.

⁴⁴Ibid.

On July 23, 1948, the third national convention was held at Philadelphia. It was unique in character. Because a great deal of vitality had been drained from the party due to world events, the delegates faced a formidable task. "The chief problem was that of attempting to regain lost ground--of renewing public interest, of reviving failing spirits of party workers, and of countering the press attacks that had proved so damaging during the spring. It should come as no surprise, then, that the Philadelphia convention ultimately became a propaganda battleground more than anything else."⁴⁵ But how successful were they in their attempt to rebuild the prestige of the Progressive Party? Did the downhill trend as evidenced by the polls continue unabated, or was Wallace able to revivify the image of the Party?

"All the lines had been written long in advance, scene by scene, act by act. The followers of Henry A. Wallace, including some 3,200 delegates...had no function except to recite them. The Communist Party was the principal author of the drama."⁴⁶ Thus spoke a journalist in the Newsweek magazine. And on the same day the following statement appeared in Time. "Henry Wallace, the Iowa horticulturist, emerged last week as the centerpiece of U.S. Communism's most authentic-looking facade...It was a sad parody of a political convention...the enthusiasm was turned off and on by the convention bosses as though they were flipping a switch."⁴⁷ How true were these allegations of Communist control?

⁴⁵Schmidt, p. 178.

⁴⁶"Behind the Wallace Scenes," Newsweek, August 2, 1948, p. 18.

⁴⁷"The Pink Facade," Time, August 2, 1948, p. 12.

Norman Thomas, who wrote a syndicated column for fourteen papers covering the Republican, Democratic and Progressive Party conventions, had some amusing and insightful comments to make about Wallace's party. Thomas noticed, "The delegates were abnormally sensitive to the color red. The Pennsylvania Railroad ordinarily designated its special trains by color. Taking no chances on having their delegates ride a 'Red Special,' the Wallaceites gave the trains...such names as 'Common Man Special' and 'World Peace Special.' Delegates' badges were blue, green and white... Further, when Vito Marcantonio found that his Rules Committee was scheduled to meet in the Pink Room of the Bellevue-Stratford, he hastily had the meeting transferred to the Green Room."⁴⁸ Perhaps Thomas made too much of the color symbol, however, there did seem to exist a super-sensitiveness to the color red.

Edward L. and Frederick H. Schapsmeier view Norman Thomas' opposition as a matter of sour grapes. According to them, it was not moral conviction but fear that the Socialist Party would be supplanted by the Progressive Party that drove Thomas to speak out against Wallace. When Leo Isacson won a special election in New York it appeared the Progressives would inherit the radical vote. Therefore, Norman Thomas "aimed his sharpest campaign barbs at Henry Wallace in an effort to salvage his own ebbing strength."⁴⁹

It is difficult to impute such motives to Thomas since only he knew what kindled the flame of opposition. In an article entitled, "Do Left-

⁴⁸ Harry Fleischman, Norman Thomas (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1964), p. 231.

⁴⁹ Prophet in Politics (Iowa: Iowa State University Press, 1970), p. 189.

Wing Parties Belong in Our System?" Norman Thomas stated his beliefs clearly. "If Henry Wallace had been the kind of man that thousands of the good people who support him believe him to be; if the control of his new party had not been so largely in the hands of the expert Communist minority, most Socialists--emphatically I, for one--would have supported him... Henry Wallace in America will not succeed where Jan Masaryk in Czechoslovakia failed. What is involved is not primarily the economic theory of Communism but its practice of bad faith and its control from Moscow."⁵⁰

If the press was ganging up on Wallace apparently there was a common base for criticism--Communist infiltration in the third party. Joseph and Stewart Alsop, Pete Akers, Rebecca West and a host of other reporters wrote in the same manner as Norman Thomas--some in even more vitriolic tones. One was referred to the Progressive Party as the "mongrel party."

At a press conference in the Bellevue-Stratford ballroom Wallace was baited unmercifully about the Guru letters.* He adamantly refused to answer the flurry of questions. But even before the conference began, Wallace belligerently announced "that he would not repudiate Communist support" and added by telling the newsmen to save their breath.⁵¹ Clearly

⁵⁰ Annals of the American Academy, September, 1948, p. 28.

*The batch of letters were allegedly written when Henry Wallace was a member of F.D.R.'s cabinet. It was claimed Wallace had sought advice from the head of a mystic cult--Dr. Nicholas Roerich who had emigrated to the United States from Russia. Wallace never denied the authenticity of these letters.

⁵¹ James A. Hagerty, Special to the New York Times, July 24, 1948.

the convention was off to a bad start as far as the fourth estate was concerned, and when the smooth, efficient staff of left-wingers ground out the rules of the party the press was soured completely.

Although television was quite limited in 1948, the radio and press coverage of the convention revealed to an astonished public the political machinations of the leftist-minority. Vito Marcantonio, as usual, worked untiringly during the convention. He and his staff wrote the keynote speech for Charles Howard, a black lawyer from Des Moines, who had once been suspended by the Bar Association for misusing funds.⁵² In the speech Howard accused the U.S. of thwarting peace with Russia.⁵³

In addition to his other activities, Marcantonio took charge of the Rules Committee, along with Hugh Bryson and John Abt, a smooth talking lawyer from New York. Together they devised a rule whereby the leftists would have solid control of the party. The worse was yet to come, however.

Rexford Tugwell, the nominal chairman of the platform committee, thought the party should go on record for a European recovery plan. He was trounced. Lee Pressman, former CIO lawyer who had been fired because he was a Communist, took charge. With the assistance of beagle-faced Harry Bridges, Pressman rammed home his platform. The Marshall Plan was repudiated and the standard verbiage of Communist beliefs was written into the program. There were further tussles over Puerto Rico and Macedonia, but it was the Vermont Resolution which seemed to spell doom for the starry-eyed idealists at the convention. According to an article in Time maga-

⁵²"The Pink Facade," p. 12.

⁵³Abels, p. 117.

zine, "A small, bespectacled Vermont farmer named James Hayford rose to present an idea. He wanted an amendment stating: 'Although we are critical of the foreign policy of the U.S., it is not our intention to give blanket endorsement to the foreign policy of any nation.'"⁵⁴

If the report is accurate, what followed was pathetic. The "chubby" convention chairman, Albert Fitzgerald, president of the United Electrical Workers, gaveled the audience into submission, and with the help of Lee Pressman, the amendment was voted down. "When this rather innocuous proposal was defeated, the hammer and sickle was for all intents and purposes unfurled before an amazed gallery of onlookers."⁵⁵

On the lighter side--this can be taken literally and figuratively--were the delegates. Helen Fuller observed that "the average delegate was about twenty years younger and thirty pounds lighter than his Democratic or GOP counterpart."⁵⁶ They were novices in the political game. They carried placards which read "Why Tarry with Harry" and "Fooley on Dewey." They dressed informally and brought their children to the convention with them--it was estimated the average age was thirty. They ate ice cream, walked or rode the trolleys instead of taking taxis. Cab drivers dubbed it the "walking convention." But most fantastic of all, the delegates listened to the speakers.

Philadelphia recognized their impecunious position--it was hard not to since many delegates lived in trailers or pitched tents in the parking

⁵⁴"The Pink Facade," p. 12.

⁵⁵Schapsmeier, p. 183.

⁵⁶Helen Fuller, p. 11.

lot across from the convention hall. Prices were lowered accordingly. Hot dogs and Coca Cola sold for five cents less than they had for the two previous conventions. Hotels and restaurants responded in like manner.⁵⁷

To some observers the roll call of the states' nominations was farcical. Everyone knew who the presidential and vice-presidential candidates were--they had both been campaigning since December 29, 1947. The time-consuming routine was tiring and nonsensical. Yet Wallace insisted upon following the traditional format of the Democratic and Republican parties, and refused to appear on the floor of the convention hall until he had been officially chosen. The masquerade was to be carried out to the last act.

The apex of the three day convention was the big extravaganza staged for Saturday evening at Shibe Park, home of the Philadelphia Athletics. The production faithfully adhered to the regular Gailmor touch. Over 30,000 people paid from 65 cents to \$2.60 for seats in order to cheer for their candidate. After the usual warm-up, Wallace was spotlighted as he circled the field in an open car, waving as the crowds went wild.

When the emotional frenzy had subsided, Wallace launched into his acceptance speech, "My Commitments." The first section contained the usual condemnatory statements aimed at the opposition. The following comments typified Wallace's attitude towards the other parties. "A party founded by a Jefferson died in the arms of a Truman...The party of a Lincoln has been reduced to the party of a Dewey.

But we here tonight--we of the Progressive Party--dedicate ourselves

⁵⁷MacDougall, II, 485-88.

to the complete fulfillment of Lincoln's promise; we consecrate ourselves to a second emancipation...."⁵⁸

In his concluding remarks Wallace went on to acknowledge his commitments made to the American people. A cursory glance at the speech would indicate that he "committed" himself to some eminently vital issues approximately twenty-five times. Here are a few excerpts from the text.

I tell you frankly that in obtaining the nomination of the Progressive Party--a nomination I accept with pride--I have made commitments...I have made them freely...I repeat them with pride: I am committed to the policy of placing human rights above property rights...I am committed to peaceful negotiations with the Soviet government...I am committed to stopping the creation of fear...I am committed to a program of progressive capitalism...And I am committed to accept and do accept the support of those who favor the program of peace I have outlined here; the support of all those who truly believe in democracy.⁵⁹

Judging from the elation Wallace experienced after the Shibe Park rally, he must have felt his chances for winning the election had been vastly improved, or at the very least, that he and his party would definitely destroy the Democratic machine. According to MacDougall, Wallace jubilantly exclaimed to Rexford Tugwell when they returned to the Bellevue-Stratford, "We're on the march. We're really rolling now. Rex, how does it seem to be the next Secretary of State of the United States?"⁶⁰

Whether this was pure bravado or actually represented Wallace's appraisal of the situation is irrelevant. The homely truth was that Henry Agard Wallace was marching on the road to ignominious defeat.

⁵⁸ Henry Agard Wallace, "My Commitments," Vital Speeches, August 1, 1948, pp. 620-23.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ MacDougall, II, 533.

CHAPTER VII

YOU TAKE THE HIGH ROAD AND I'LL TAKE THE LOW ROAD

While the professional pollsters, Gallup, Crossley and Roper, unhesitatingly predicted Truman's defeat, Leslie Biffle, Secretary of the Senate and close personal friend of the President's, compiled his own figures from a chicken poll he took. Properly accoutered in overalls, Biffle the chicken peddler, rode around the country* in a spring wagon asking the people how they felt about Truman. The response: overwhelmingly positive. Said Biffle upon his return, "Now listen, Harry, you don't have to worry. The common people are for ya."¹

The journalistic world, however, viewed the analysis differently. "Men of little or no experience in the earthy art of politics-- have been telling Mr. Truman that the political experts are wrong, that he has the popular support to make him a winner..." Unfortunately, he has come to believe them. "He exudes confidence."²

*According to Jules Abels, West Virginia, Kentucky, southern Ohio and Illinois were the states Leslie Biffle covered. He left by truck on August 1 and returned three weeks later to report his findings to Truman. (Out of the Jaws of Victory, p. 163.)

¹Merle Miller, Plain Speaking (New York: Berkeley Publishing Corporation, 1973), p. 262.

²"The Truman-Barkley Team," U.S. News, July 23, 1948, p. 42.

The approach adopted by President Truman and Governor Dewey in the presidential campaign sharply reflected their attitudes. Dewey, over-confident and reassured by the polls, "chose the high road for his campaign."³ He was "suave, polished in oratory, and cool in his bearing."⁴ Truman, also serenely confident of victory, "chose the low road."⁵ Knowing that he was the underdog, the President took the offensive and gave "homey, explosive, attacking speeches."⁶

The vice-presidential candidates emphasized the contrast even more. Barkley, the 70-year old southerner, delivered his speeches in somewhat ponderous tones and "old-fashioned" rhetoric. Whereas Mr. Warren, the 57-year old Californian, was casual, disarming and witty.⁷

Although both the presidential candidates displayed a victorious air, there was no doubt that Truman was faced with the greatest number of problems. In a dismal forecast, the U.S. News and World Report listed what it felt would be the reasons Truman would go down in defeat. The diagnosis was disheartening. There were six major items which spelled doom for the Democrats. They were as follows: 1) Henry A. Wallace's break from the party, 2) the States'

³Cabell Phillips, The Truman Presidency (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1966), p. 225.

⁴"Truman-Barkley Team."

⁵Phillips, p. 225.

⁶"Truman-Barkley Team"

⁷Ibid.

Rights' revolt, 3) lack of money for campaign purposes, 4) a crack-up of city machines in Chicago, Jersey City, and New York, 5) the division of the labor vote, and 6) the wish for a political change.⁸ To what degree these adversities were to effect Truman's campaign remained to be seen.

Yet, not everyone in the fourth estate wrote Truman off. There still existed a few stalwart free-thinkers within the system who cautioned against a too simplistic evaluation of the election. Robert Bendiner, for example, had this advice to give all prognosticators: "...get rid of the idea that the 1948 election is wrapped up and ready for delivery to Governor Dewey." He insisted that the farm vote would not necessarily go to the Republicans. "High food prices, to begin with, do not make for that unrest among farmers that prompts them to call for a change." Furthermore, said Bendiner, "...the apparatus of the labor movement is at Truman's disposal right now."⁹ And indeed it was!

One of the strange aspects of the 1948 election was the inability of the news media to interpret correctly the material they had gathered. For instance, the U.S. News and World Report stated in a July article that the labor unions would spend millions on the Democratic campaign.¹⁰ And again, in September the magazine reit-

⁸"Mr. Dewey's Victory Chances," U.S. News, September 17, 1948, p. 13.

⁹Robert Bendiner, "Don't Count Truman Out," Nation, September 11, 1948, p. 282.

¹⁰"Big Election Drive by Unions," U.S. News, July 23, 1948, p. 53.

erated its assertion that labor would make an all-out drive for Truman.¹¹ Yet, oddly the findings were distorted to such an extent that Truman was given little hope of winning labor's vote. The staff writers reasoned that the union leaders did not actually trust the President, therefore, the campaign kitty would be concentrated on the candidates for Congress, not on Truman. Whether this was wishful-thinking or deliberate garbling of facts is unknown. Nevertheless, the myth of Truman's unpopularity persisted as the presidential candidates prepared themselves for the final onslaught in the election.

In order to win the workingmen's votes, Truman delivered his kickoff speech on Labor Day in Detroit, Michigan.¹² Following his successful June formula, the President turned this first skirmish into a "mini-whistle-stop tour" which began at 8:15 in the morning and ended with a rear platform performance at 11:55 in the evening. From Grand Rapids, Michigan to Toledo, Ohio the crowds turned out in droves, much to the astonishment of Truman's critics. Reporters were dumbfounded when the entire population of the city of Hamtramck responded to the President's brief visit. There were 15,000 at Pontiac and 35,000 at Flint, Michigan. And in the Republican stronghold of Grand Rapids, 25,000 spectators turned out to cheer the President in the pouring down rain.¹³ The press, taken off guard,

¹¹"Political Plans of Union," U.S. News, September 10, 1948, p. 43.

¹²"From Skirmishes into Open Battle," Newsweek, September 13, 1948, p. 17.

¹³Margaret Truman, Harry S. Truman (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1973), p. 20. Irwin Ross, The Loneliest Campaign (New York: New American Library, 1968), p. 177.

blandly attributed the crowds to the novelty of seeing a President.

The highlight of the day, however, was at Detroit, Michigan. Here Truman delivered his major address in Cadillac Square to a crowd of 175,000. Said Truman, "As you know, I speak plainly sometimes--in fact, I speak bluntly sometimes and I am going to speak plainly and bluntly today."¹⁴ If you elect the Republican reactionaries, "...you men of labor can expect to be hit by a steady barrage of body blows...I would fear not only for the wages and living standards of the American working man, but even for our democratic institutions of free labor and free enterprise."¹⁵

In a direct appeal to the housewives of America he was compassionate. "My sympathy is with those best of business managers, the wives and mothers of this nation. Think how they have to make the pay envelopes stretch with each rise in prices."¹⁶

The speech ended on a cautionary note. "Do you want to carry the Taft-Hartley law to its full implication and totally enslave the working man, white-collar and union man alike...? Labor had always had to fight for its gains...I know that we're going to win this crusade for the right."¹⁷

The audience reaction was spontaneous and enthusiastic. Parroting the now famous injunction to "Pour it on, Harry," the crowd roared its assent as wave after wave of applause filled

¹⁴ Harry S. Truman, "Labor Must Have a Friendly Administration," Vital Speeches, September 15, 1948, p. 712.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 713.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 714. ¹⁷ Ibid.

Cadillac Square.¹⁸ Even the "lukewarm labor leaders," AFL's William Green, CIO's Philip Murray and Teamsters' president Daniel Tobin, were impressed.¹⁹

Not surprisingly, however, the Republicans viewed the initial success with scorn. Employing the GOP strategy of aloofness, Dewey "disdainfully" held his fire against Truman's charges. Instead the Governor assigned Stassen the task of rebuttal when he asked him to deliver the GOP's kickoff speech on September 8.²⁰

With a crowd of only about 3,000, Stassen spoke at Detroit, Michigan, just two days after Truman's rally. His speech, designed for the sole purpose of defending the Taft-Hartley bill, lacked the vitality and spark of his opponent. Addressing his meager audience Stassen said, "It is clear that your special visitor of yesterday came...as a complaining candidate for election and labor's vote... He used a day set apart for all Americans to honor American labor, and instead dishonored labor with an...appeal to set class against class..."²¹ Stassen stressed the "visitor's" (he refused to use Truman's name) attempt to create disunity. He compared the President with Henry Wallace. Both men, said Stassen, "were in agreement on the erroneous misconceived appraisal of postwar America. He followed Wallace. Wallace followed those who had no faith in

¹⁸Phillips, p. 232.

¹⁹Margaret Truman, p. 20.

²⁰"From Skirmishes into Open Battle."

²¹Harold Stassen, "People Want a United America," Vital Speeches, September 15, 1948, p. 714.

in America."²²

The last statement is noteworthy. A peculiar ploy that developed during the 1948 election was the attempt to identify the opposition with the Communist party, thereby discrediting them in the public eye. Stassen's effort to equate Truman with Wallace was just one of many instances when the GOP tried this technique on Truman. Dewey himself used this approach. In an article which appeared in the American Federationist, Dewey said, "...the Soviet dictatorship has made the Russian unions creatures of the state, instruments to terrorize and keep enslaved the Russian workers. With these awful lessons before us, we must zealously guard against any...efforts to make the American labor movement a political company union...It is with men who share that philosophy, not with those who accept a foreign ideology, that we will work in Washington."²³ Few voters, however, were duped by these tactics.

Disgruntled by the almost half-empty hall, Stassen later "charged that workers had been coerced into attending the Truman rallies, that James Hoffa, head of the Teamsters in Detroit, had ordered union members to attend or be fired."²⁴ Jules Abels, an obvious Dewey fan, recites this incident as though it were fact. The Republicans must indeed have had a low opinion of the American

²²Ibid., p. 715.

²³"Thomas E. Dewey Speaks to Labor," American Federationist, September, 1948, p. 30.

²⁴Jules Abels, Out of the Jaws of Victory, p. 169.

people if they thought 175,000 persons could be herded like so many frightened sheep into Cadillac Square.

A whisper of concern escaped the lips of Republican National Chairman Hugh Scott when he warned his party that overconfidence could lose the election. But the voice was swallowed up in the remorseless predictions of the pollsters. In the September 20 issue of Newsweek, Gallup gave 48½ per cent of the vote to Dewey, 36½ to Truman, 5 to Wallace and 10 undecided. Elmer Roper said Dewey was a shoo-in, consequently he was going to stop polling. His last forecast was: Dewey 44.2 per cent, Truman 31.4, Thurmond 4.4, Wallace 3.6, others and undecided 16.4. Crossley predicted that Dewey would win by a large margin and that Truman could only be certain of carrying nine states.²⁵ The public-opinion experts, however, were having a hard time convincing the President that he was going to lose.

"I am just starting on a campaign tour that is going to be a record for the President of the United States."²⁶ Thus challenged Truman as he prepared to take off for his first transcontinental tour on September 17. With only a brief weekend rest on his yacht Williamsburg after his hectic Labor Day junket, Truman revived and raring to go proclaimed, "I'm going to give them hell."²⁷

"I had warned my staff and the reporters who prepared to make the trip with me that I was going out to win the election,"

²⁵"Dewey by a Strawslide," Newsweek, September 20, 1948, p. 28.

²⁶"Campaign Kickoff," Ibid.

²⁷"Hell on Wheels," Ibid., September 27, 1948, p. 17.

said Truman in his Memoirs. And he meant it. Brisk, vibrant and looking every inch a champion, the President dressed in a trim double-breasted tan suit smilingly waved goodbye to his friends. As Barkley shouted gaily, "Mow 'em down, Harry!!" Truman responded with equal gusto, "I'm going to fight hard." It was "V-T" day-- Victory for Truman.²⁸

The 9,500 mile trip was a replica of his June performance, with two notable exceptions. On this all important coast-to-coast tour, two advance men--Oscar Chapman, the Under Secretary of the Interior, and Donald Dawson, a presidential administrative assistant--traveled ahead of the Ferdinand Magellan to check out the details of all political appearances. According to Irwin Ross, they wanted no repetition of the empty hall in Omaha, Nebraska. Also, this time Truman welcomed aboard his "suite-on-wheels" any Democratic politician that wished to greet him.²⁹

The pace was killing. Wherever the train stopped Truman made a point of showing "himself to the curious window shoppers." He was like a "mannikin in a show window."³⁰ Yet he seemed to thrive on perpetual interruptions, lack of sleep and constant motion. He said in his book, "It was quite a campaign. I worked my staff almost to death. I believe that at one time or another I put them all to bed, and despite its long hours and hard work I gained weight

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹"Hell on Wheels, and Ross, p. 181.

³⁰"Hell on Wheels.

during the campaign."³¹

His stamina and cordiality were demonstrated clearly when he welcomed Jake Arvey, Chicago's Democratic boss, aboard the train at 2:15 in the morning. The meeting caused quite a stir because Arvey had been in the vanguard of the dump-Truman movement. Furthermore, Arvey had made no effort to see the President when he stopped in Chicago in June. In spite of this background of dissension, President Truman received his guest, sitting up in bed attired in pajamas and bathrobe. Said Arvey sheepishly, "He looked sleepy and I felt like a heel for getting him up." Nevertheless, at 5:00 a.m. more Illinois politicians climbed on board the train to be photographed with Truman. Described as "fresh and chipper," the 64-year old President amazingly showed no signs of wear and tear.³²

The campaign train finally rolled into Dexter, Iowa where Truman was to deliver his first major address of the tour. The occasion was the National Plowing Contest. The day was hot and humid as 75,000* men and women crowded onto a 10-acre alfalfa field.³³ "The plowing plus the feet of 75,000 farmers and their families stirred up a huge cloud of choking dust, which simply hung there,"

³¹Truman, Memoirs, II, 211.

³²"Hell on Wheels."

*Truman claimed there were 96,000 people present at Dexter, Iowa. He based his figures on the following assumption. "There was ten acres, and the place was jammed full. Now figure three to the square yard and you'll see how many there were." (Merle Miller, p. 258)

³³Ibid.

said Margaret Truman in her recollections of the event.³⁴ Yet, despite the 90 degree sun and "ankle-deep dust," the crowd listened intently as Truman discussed their problems.

The President displayed an uncanny ability to identify with the farmers. In Merle Miller's book Plain Speaking, Truman said, "You've got to know how to talk to people. That's the whole thing, and you've got to convince them that you know what you're talking about. They don't go for high hats, and they can spot a phony a mile off."³⁵ Thus when Truman reminded them that he too had been a farmer and could plow a straight furrow, they believed him. And when he pointed to fifty private planes parked in an adjacent field, and told them how they had prospered under the Democratic administrations, they believed him.³⁶ And when he pointed out the failure of Congress to provide storage bins for their grain, they believed him. And when he told them that the Republicans were out to "scuttle the whole farm price support system," they believed him.³⁷

Significantly, what hit the headlines were Truman's more volatile, and by now traditional, phrases. For instance, Newsweek quoted these excerpts from his speech: "...the President...gave 'em hell...he assailed his political enemies as 'gluttons of privilege' ...he accused them of aiming to 'take the country over, lock, stock, and barrel,'...he said 'that notorious do-nothing Republican 80th

³⁴Margaret Truman, p. 21.

³⁵Miller, p. 258.

³⁶Phillips, p. 236. ³⁷Abels, pp. 171-176, and Phillips, p. 236.

Congress...has already stuck a pitchfork in the farmer's back'...and he warned his listeners against being fooled by 'plain hokum.'"³⁸

Happily for Truman, the press had missed the salient points of his speech. They saw only the rabble-rousing techniques of a game fighter, thus lulling themselves and the GOP into a false sense of security. Consequently, it was here, in the heartland of Republicanism, that Truman captured a significant number of votes.

"Lack of money is almost silencing the Democratic campaign. Up to the middle of September the Republicans in Oregon had collected \$77,578, the Democrats less than \$3,000."³⁹ It was true the Democrats lacked money, but it was false that it silenced the campaign. Many times the President himself was forced to solicit funds for his trip. And more than once, the occupants of the "Truman Special" found themselves without enough cash to get out of the train station. But somehow with the frantic efforts of all, the bills were paid, the train redeemed and the company moved on."⁴⁰

Howard McGrath and Jack Redding, the publicity director, frequently carried \$25,000 to \$30,000 in cash in order to pay for radio time. It was not uncommon for President Truman to be cut off in the middle of a sentence. Yet, according to Margaret Truman, this kind of treatment helped his image with the American people who

³⁸"Hell on Wheels, p. 18.

³⁹Richard Neuberger, "Slow-Bell Campaign in the Northwest," Nation, October 16, 1948, p. 422.

⁴⁰Margaret Truman, pp. 20-21.

tended to favor the underdog.⁴¹ In spite of these inconveniences, however, the Ferdinand Magellan rolled along with unvarying regularity.

The routine aboard the train followed a regular pattern. Usually the presidential party began its business of politicking between 6:00 and 8:00 in the morning. At this time any aspiring candidate for office, local hero, Governor, Senator or Congressman--all Democratic, of course--would board the 17-car train to see and be seen. With the social amenities thus taken care of, the President would then attend one or two outdoor rallies and return to the train in order to keep to his schedule. Wherever a crowd gathered along the way at a railroad station, the President would stop to chat. The grand finale consisted of the introduction of Mrs. Truman and daughter Margaret.

Truman's family proved enormously popular on the tour. Even the hostile press wrote engagingly of Bess and Margaret. At 63, Mrs. Truman was described as "cool, calm, and collected." Though she never discussed politics, she watched the audience reaction with a keen observant eye. Possessed of a "great natural dignity," she ministered not only to the needs of her husband, but of "campaign aides, secretaries and dignitaries alike." She was much loved. The President's 24-year old daughter was a perfect complement to her. As outgoing as Mrs. Truman was reserved, Margaret laughed, waved and signed autographs. She admittedly enjoyed the excitement of campaigning.⁴²

⁴¹Ibid.

⁴²"His Woman Have It," Newsweek, October 4, 1948, pp. 22-23.

On Monday, September 20, the 285,000 pound, bulletproof train roared its way into Denver, Colorado. Here the President addressed an audience of 25,000 in front of the state capitol. It was broadcast over a national radio hookup.⁴³ In a direct appeal to the western states, Truman said, "Every time I come out this way I feel again the tremendous vitality of the West...This is a straight-from-the-shoulder country, and it has produced a great breed of fighting men." He attacked the Republicans for attempting "to turn back the clock to the day when the West was an economic colony of Wall Street." Then in reference to the specific concerns of Colorado, Truman discussed the need for conservation of natural resources, reclamation projects and public power. Always aiming his barbs at the do-nothing Eightieth Congress, the President reminded his audience that in 1947 the Republicans took control of Congress. "And that was the first year in which the Congress took a step backward in the spiral of soil conservation since that program was begun."⁴⁴

"Cordial but unenthusiastic" reported the Newsweek about the 25,000 people who attended the rally. The old technique of playing the East against the West might be a common practice, but it will make no difference as far as Colorado's six electoral votes are concerned, concluded the editors.⁴⁵

His throat raw from giving so many speeches, Truman never-

⁴³Ross, p. 186 and Margaret Truman, p. 1.

⁴⁴Harry S. Truman, "The Democratic Record," Vital Speeches, October 1, 1948, p. 746.

⁴⁵"The Truman Punch," Newsweek, October 4, 1948, p. 21.

theless continued his offensive with vigor. In Salt Lake City 50,000 people lined the street from the railroad station to his hotel. And later that evening, 11,500 poured into the Mormon Tabernacle under the beautiful "melon-shaped dome" to hear the President deliver his message. In spite of an appeal to subdue their applause, the crowd forgot the injunction and interrupted Truman's speech sixteen times with uncontrolled enthusiasm.⁴⁶

"At first the critics referred to my tour as a "one-man-circus and called it less efficient and less dignified than the campaign being put on by the Republicans," said Truman in his Memoirs. "But as the crowds grew larger and larger and more people flocked to my train than showed up around the Dewey train, our opponents began to get worried."⁴⁷ Note well, Truman said his "opponents" were beginning to worry, not the press. Reporters consistently explained the crowds away by saying they were "big" but "unenthusiastic." Hypnotized by their own predictions of a Dewey landslide, the fourth estate was unable to reverse its decision.

At Reno, Nevada, the President accused the Republican chairmen of the Senate and the House of Representatives of being "a bunch of old mossbacks...living in the 1890's." In Roseville, California, he enjoined the crowds to enlist in the crusade "to keep the country from going to the dogs."⁴⁸ And at Fresno he stated that "You have got a terrible Congressman here in this district...He is one of the

⁴⁶Ibid.

⁴⁷Truman, Memoirs, II, 210.

⁴⁸"That Truman Punch."

worst obstructionists in the Congress. He has done everything he possibly could to cut the throats of the farmer and the laboring man. If you send him back, that will be your fault if you get your throats cut."⁴⁹

According to the Time magazine, Truman's temper was becoming as raw as his throat. At Ogden, Utah, he interrupted his off-the-cuff speech "to scold and silence a group of noisy boys who had climbed a nearby tree." (Margaret Truman's version of this episode is very different.) But things got worse. Irritated by the small turnout in Oakland, Truman is said to have taken it out on the cameramen "who popped their flashes at him." Snapped the President, "I have trouble enough seeing, as it is. Those things blind me. Stop it. Stop it."⁵⁰ The camera corps apparently registered amazement at the impatience of the President. In the past, he had always been one of the most courteous and obliging of politicians.

However, even Time magazine acknowledged that Truman's characteristic good humor had reasserted itself as the train edged toward Los Angeles.⁵¹ Though the crowds had been thin in the Bay area, they picked up perceptibly in southern California--a half million people, once again, lined the streets of L.A. to cheer him. Albeit the press attributed the large numbers to the fact that more people were on the street at 5:00 p.m. than at 4:00 p.m. when Dewey's motorcade arrived.⁵² The warm reception plus the news that the

⁴⁹Ross, p. 188.

⁵⁰"They Tear You Apart," Time, October 4, 1948, p. 19.

⁵¹Ibid.

⁵²Leo Egan, Special to the New York Times, September 25, 1948.

Gallup poll showed he had gained six points since early September buoyed him up immeasurably.⁵³

The triumphant swing back home began as Truman left San Diego where he had met his most enthusiastic audience to date.⁵⁴ The "Presidential Special" cut through Arizona and New Mexico, with a few brief stops, and then into Texas. The four-day tour of the Lone Star State was considered extraordinary since Texas was traditionally Democratic. The Dixiecrat infiltration, however, had necessitated the move. President Truman made a total of twenty-four stops.

Governor Beauford H. Jester, Representative Sam Rayburn and Attorney General Tom C. Clark greeted Truman at the border at El Paso in an attempt to show a unified Democratic front. "'Maghty welcome,'" said Beauford.⁵⁵ Jester's display of southern hospitality differed radically from his earlier statement that Truman had stabbed the South in the back.⁵⁶ Nonetheless, the time had arrived to hold hands and mend fences.

Clearly sidestepping the civil rights issue, the President plunged into his usual hyperbolic oratory. He accused the Republican leaders of cutting the reclamation program for the West by more than 50 per cent. Chairman of the Appropriations Committee, John Taber of New York, defended the cut, said Truman, by saying "The

⁵³"The Truman Punch."

⁵⁴W. H. Lawrence, Special to the New York Times, September 25, 1948.

⁵⁵"That Truman Punch," p. 22.

⁵⁶Abels, p. 183, and Margaret Truman, p. 33.

West is squealing like a stuck pig."⁵⁷

Early Sunday morning, September 26, Truman stopped at Uvalde to visit a friend and former vice-president of the United States, John Nance Garner. The visit had tremendous political value for the President. "Cactus Jack" at 79 was still one of the most revered members of the conservative Democrats in Texas, and he made it manifestly clear that he was for Truman.

Aside from the political connotations, the occasion has been remembered for two reasons: 1) the breakfast the Presidential party ate and, 2) the fact that Mrs. Truman spoke to the crowd of well-wishers. The menu for the "super-Texas breakfast" consisted of "orange juice, mourning dove, white-winged dove, chicken, rice and gravy, ham, bacon, scrambled eggs, biscuits, Uvalde honey, preserves, pecans, and coffee."⁵⁸ Truman ate a little of everything and then gave Garner a bottle of snake-bite medicine in appreciation.⁵⁹ "Glad you liked it," muttered Garner, and then replaced his store bought teeth in his pocket.⁶⁰ Mrs. Truman said, "Good morning and thank you for this wonderful greeting." It was 5:00 a.m.⁶¹ And so began another day in the long campaign trail.

The policy of "voluntary segregation" saved the President from

⁵⁷"They'll Tear You Apart," p. 20.

⁵⁸Ibid.

⁵⁹Margaret Truman, p. 34.

⁶⁰"The Truman Punch."

⁶¹Ross, p. 202.

any embarrassing or unpleasant situation. Truman did experience a few tense moments in Waco when the crowd booed as he shook hands with a black woman. But on the whole, the attitude of both Negro and white was one of aloof detachment. "We're not aiming to provoke anybody, least of all Mr. Truman," capsulized a Dallas Negro.⁶² In fact, the much dreaded rally in Dallas proved to be enormously successful. The Rebel Stadium was packed and there were no racial disturbances.⁶³ When Attorney General Tom Clark introduced the President as the man "who stopped Joe Lewis," Truman laughingly explained to the baffled audience: "Tom gave me too much credit. It was John Lewis I stopped. I don't have enough muscle to have stopped Joe."⁶⁴ The quip endeared Truman to the blacks in the audience.

The cross-country trip continued through Oklahoma, Missouri, Illinois and finally drove deep in "Kentucky's 'hoss' country." In Louisville, 40,000 union members turned out to hear the President speak, only to learn that he was two hours behind schedule. Informed of the delay, the crowds were told to go home and return later. Amazingly, 35,000 people did return, with thousands of others streaming into the old armory for the major address of the evening. Kentucky vocally demonstrated its attitude toward the civil rights issue when the crowd roared its approval of Governor Earle C. Clements opening statement. He said, "Kentucky remained in the Union in 1861

⁶²"They Call Me Harry," Newsweek, October 1, 1948, p. 25.

⁶³Margaret Truman, p. 32.

⁶⁴Ibid.

and she'll not secede in 1948."⁶⁵

In Lexington, the following morning, Truman spoke to an audience from the rear platform of the train. Unabashedly, the President compared himself to Citation, the money-making horse who was a slow starter, but a strong finisher. "You people know a great deal about horse races in Lexington, and you know that it doesn't matter which horse is ahead or behind at a given moment," said the President. "It's the horse that comes out ahead at the finish that counts. I am trying to do in politics what Citation has done in horse races. I propose at the finish line on November 2 to come out ahead..."⁶⁶

Truman had every reason to believe he would make a Citation-like finish. The immense turnouts continued in Kentucky and West Virginia. In the very heart of John L. Lewis's bailiwick, the coal miners poured out from the surrounding hills to meet the President. At Montgomery, West Virginia, 12,000 thronged the streets of the mining town to prove their loyalty and trust. The population was only 5,000.

The first lap of the Presidential race ended for Truman as the Ferdinand Magellan pulled into the Union Station on Saturday, October 2. The crowd which met the train was described as "meager," and the welcome as "perfunctory." In spite of this, the President remained confident and unafraid. Looking forward to a four-day rest before setting out on his next whistle-stop tour, he gazed

⁶⁵Ibid.

⁶⁶"The Long Shot Won't Give Up," Newsweek, October 11, 1948, p. 25.

"indifferently" at the deserted streets of Washington, D.C.⁶⁷

"Thomas E. Dewey wasn't giving anybody hell."⁶⁸ Dressed in a blue business suit and gray Homburg, the Governor and his family attended Mass at St. Peter's Episcopal Church on Sunday, September 19, and later in the afternoon boarded the "Victory Special" for the first tour of the campaign. Dewey was "off to dog" the footsteps of the President, who had begun his trip two days before.

Truman and Dewey had one thing in common in their campaigns. They both welcomed politicians on board their respective trains whenever they entered a new state. But the similarity stopped there. Dewey's 17-car train was run like a computerized robot. The timetable mapped out for the Governor was exact down to the last detail. Even more remarkable, was that the "Victory Special" worked with such clinical precision the train was never more than twenty minutes late. As the projected winner of the Presidential race, more journalists joined the Dewey cavalcade than Truman's. The Governor's "personal staff numbered 43, compared with Truman's 20-odd."⁶⁹ And each member performed his task with unquestioned professionalism.

The GOP strategy was adhered to from the very beginning of the tour. Dewey was to play it safe. He was to avoid all verbal confrontation with his feisty opponent who was trying to draw him into

⁶⁷"They Call Me Harry," p. 26.

⁶⁸"Harmony Express," Newsweek, September 27, 1948, p. 18.

⁶⁹Ross, pp. 191-192.

open debate. The polls didn't lie. He was to be the next President. The only danger for the Republican party was the loss of control in the Senate."⁷⁰ With this in mind, Dewey set out for Iowa to plug for the Republican senatorial candidate, Senator George A. Wilson. "That Iowa would go for Dewey was a cinch."⁷¹

On Monday evening, September 20, Dewey delivered his kickoff speech in the Drake University Field House, Des Moines, Iowa. The address was noteworthy for its absence of farm issues. Drafted by the efficient Dewey team, the speech "was intentionally a mass of generalizations about national and world problems," with little or no concrete advice as how to solve them. This first speech set the pattern for those that were to follow.⁷²

The excerpts taken from the Des Moines address typify Dewey's style. "Tonight we enter upon a campaign to unite all America...We will rediscover the essential unity of our people and the spiritual strength that makes our country great...I pledge to you that, as President, every act of mine will be determined by one principle... Is this good for our country?"⁷³

Nowhere did Dewey strike a responsive chord with the farm belt. The high-sounding oratory remained in the stratified air of the intellectual. Whereas Truman had given the farmer something to think

⁷⁰Abels, p. 179.

⁷¹Harmony Express."

⁷²Ibid.

⁷³Thomas E. Dewey, "Time for American Affirmation," Vital Speeches, September 27, 1948, p. 740.

about in Dexter, the reverse was true of Dewey. "The farmer remembered nothing of what Dewey had said precisely because Dewey had said nothing."⁷⁴

There were times during the speech, contended Irwin Ross, that the tone seemed more appropriate "to a victory statement than a campaign manifesto."⁷⁵ He cited the following example: "I will not contend that all our difficulties today have been brought about by the present national administration. They haven't. Some of these unhappy conditions are the result of circumstances beyond the control of any government."⁷⁶ Presumptuous of victory and condescending in tone, Dewey's magnanimous gesture of absolution was, nonetheless, applauded by the press, or at least by the majority of the press. However, there remained a few voices crying in the wilderness. One such wrote a witty and discerning critique of the speech which appeared in the Nation:

"When Governor Dewey launched his campaign at Des Moines a few weeks ago, he promised his audience: 'I will not offer one solution to one group and another solution to another group.' He has kept his word. To date, he has offered no solution to any group..." The journalist continued his dissection of the speech. Dewey's formula for good government is to hire "an administration of able and honest men and women." Calling this policy into question the author wrote, "Able and honest men and women may be just what the government needs,

⁷⁴Abels, p. 180.

⁷⁵Ross, p. 194. ⁷⁶Dewey, p. 741.

but not even Boss Tweed would have run on a plank calling for incompetent and dishonest men and women." The article of denunciation ended with the scathing comment. "According to the Baltimore Sun, Tom Dewey 'is a middle-of-the-road man if ever we saw one.' How can the Sun tell, when Dewey won't get out on the road."⁷⁷

The Nation, of course, did not reach as many American homes as Time and Newsweek which were ferociously anti-Truman. The following is an example of Newsweek's analysis of Dewey's speeches. "Even if Dewey rarely got down to specific issues, his audiences liked what he said."⁷⁸ Such divination boggles the mind. Not only were Dewey's speeches sleep-inducing, but seldom did they evoke the kind of audience reaction Truman got. Usually, Dewey's crowds applauded with polite restraint. Oregon, a state noted for its rambunctious electioneering, greeted the New Yorker with apathy. According to one report, "Dewey drove through Portland to applause so feeble it would not have brought a vaudeville hooper back for an encore. Yet he is practically certain to win in Oregon."⁷⁹

Still the press continued to bestow its benediction on Dewey. They billed him as the "new Dewey, the human Dewey." They worked to overcome the image of a cold, aloof personality. The results were embarrassing. Dewey was quiet and reserved by nature, and the artificial camaraderie he displayed occasionally seemed stilted and

⁷⁷"Cautious Tom," Nation, October 16, 1948, p. 416.

⁷⁸"The Dewey Calm," Newsweek, October 4, 1948, p. 20.

⁷⁹Richard Neuberger, "Slow-Bell Campaign in the Northwest," Nation, October 16, 1948, p. 422.

awkward. For instance, when a bold woman in Rock Island, Illinois, screeched "Hi, Tom!" while he was talking, the "new Dewey" smiled, waved and yelled back "Hi!"⁸⁰ This much touted story was as out of keeping with his personality, as his romp with the Oregon cavemen. However, this was the portrayal the press wished to propagate.

The Dewey train moved westward with "leisurely assurance." The crowds in Illinois, Iowa, Colorado, Arizona and New Mexico turned out to hear the "glittering platitudes" of the GOP candidate.⁸¹ Like Truman, Dewey spoke to his admirers from the rear platform of the train; but unlike Truman, he never changed the format of his talks. He appealed for "unity," promised honest and competent government, denounced those who played group against group and criticized the nation's "wobbling" foreign policy.⁸² His most popular statement, however, dealt with the Communist issue.* Said Dewey, "This administration asked Congress for \$25,000,000 to spot and fire the Communists

⁸⁰The Dewey Calm," p. 19.

⁸¹"Dogi Cligin and the West," Time, October 4, 1948, p. 21.

⁸²Ibid.

*During the height of the 1948 campaign, Elizabeth Bentley and Whittaker Chambers, former Communist party members, testified before the House Un-American Activities Committee that Communist groups had operated in Washington, D.C. before and during the war. Alger Hiss, 43-year old former State Department official had been identified as a key member of the ring of Communists within the government. This became a major issue in the campaign. Truman branded the Committee's hearings and its demand for federal employee's records as a "red herring," and promised to fight the campaign issue along that line. Governor Dewey promised to "promptly" rid the government of all Communists. ("Spy Investigation," Newsweek, August 30, 1948, p. 15; "Wide of the Mark," Time, August 16, 1948, p. 17; and "Communist Control Plans," U.S. News, September 10, 1948, p. 18.)

whom they themselves put in the government. I have a better way to handle the Communists--and a cheaper one. We won't put any Communists in the government in the first place."⁸³

The "Black Mustache," the Navajo's name for Dewey, paid special attention to the newly enfranchised Indians in New Mexico and Arizona. Presumably, they were registering under the Republican banner. Dewey and his wife posed happily with the Indians.⁸⁴

Los Angeles was a high-water-mark for the Governor. Urged by the top California Republicans to change his approach, Dewey delivered a pepped up speech which "wowed" the audience of 28,000. According to the Newsweek, Dewey didn't like the revision as well as the original, but he was told to get down from his Olympian heights and sock it to them. Since he had failed so miserably in his 1944 speech in Los Angeles, Dewey had no alternative but to acquiesce.⁸⁵ The main thrust of his speech was Communism. He proposed a counter-offensive of propaganda against the Reds, and ridiculed Truman for referring to the threat as a "red herring."

Encouraged by the response in Los Angeles, Dewey maintained his "pugnacious" stance at San Francisco. He still refused to use Truman's name in his talks, but there was no doubt who he meant when he accused the Administration of "dropping monkey wrenches into the economic machinery." The audience must have been pleased with his short-lived slugging match; they interrupted his speech 32 times

⁸³"The Dewey Calm," p. 20.

⁸⁴"Dogi Cligin." ⁸⁵"The Dewey Calm."

with applause.⁸⁶

Despite this brief departure from his usual high-flown style, it is generally acknowledged that Dewey maintained a temperate tone throughout his campaign. So much so, in fact, that the press complained it was a dull show. Dewey's refusal to spar with Truman "suppressed the natural excitement" of a Presidential race. Moderate and non-controversial, "Dewey's campaign increasingly came to resemble an elaborate lecture tour."⁸⁷ Jules Abels inserted in his book a list of hackneyed sayings taken from Dewey's speeches. The inventory was compiled by the Democratic National Committee. "You know that your future lies ahead of you," "Our streams should abound with fish," "Everyone that rides in a car or bus uses gasoline or oil," "The miners of our country are vital to our welfare." No one could take exception to these comments and apparently that was the only objective of the Dewey team. They deliberately avoided any "specifics." Said Elliott Bell, one of Dewey's speech-writers, it is far more difficult "to write a speech saying nothing, than to write a speech saying something."⁸⁸ With this non-committal attitude firmly entrenched in their minds, the Dewey "Victory Special" toured the Pacific Northwest, then raced home through Wyoming, Kansas and Missouri.

On October 3, Dewey returned to Albany, having completed an 8,862-mile trip. Though his throat had been sprayed every morning,

⁸⁶"Dogi Cligin."

⁸⁷Ross, p. 205.

⁸⁸Abels, p. 189.

it seemed none the worse for wear after delivering thirteen formal addresses and forty-seven rear platform speeches.* Nor had his confidence been weakened as to the final result of the race--though he should have given more pause for reflection.⁸⁹ "The crowds were good--but no more than good--and they reflected their candidates calm confidence."⁹⁰ The polls continued to sustain Dewey in his erroneous belief of ultimate victory. Dewey's team should have been more alert.

Elliott Bell admitted to Irwin Ross in an interview after the election, that the warning signs of public apathy were plainly visible had they been wise enough to divine the meaning. The crowds were appreciably smaller, but they missed the point. Bell recalled, "'We hit Salt Lake City around five p.m. I was struck by the fact that there were very few people on the sidewalks--and a good many people walking hardly bothered to look at the motorcade.' He was puzzled, but hardly worried."⁹¹

* * * * *

The game of electioneering would not be complete without the campaign tours of the vice-presidential candidates. Thus while Truman and Dewey paused between bouts, Alben Barkley and Earl Warren

*Truman had traveled slightly less than Dewey. He covered 8,300 miles, yet delivered more speeches--140 in all. ("They Call Me Harry," Newsweek, October 11, 1948, p. 26.)

⁸⁹"The Human Dewey," Newsweek, October 11, 1948, p. 27.

⁹⁰"Dogi Cligin," p. 21.

⁹¹Ross, p. 207.

continued to stump the country for votes.

Barkley, the "poor man's candidate," traveled by plane, train and rented car. He covered thirty-six states and made over 250 speeches. He spoke anywhere and everywhere--in hotel dining rooms, town halls, jerry-built platforms and trailer trucks. Like all good running mates, Barkley refrained from voicing his own opinions, but instead echoed Truman's views. However, in all fairness to the Veep, it has been noted that he far surpassed Truman in delivery. His energy was astounding and his good temper unflinching. When asked by a New Haven reporter if he thought the Democrats would win, he replied with a chuckle: "Certainly. What do you think I'm running around for?"⁹²

Governor Earl Warren's tour was in sharp contrast to Barkley's. The vice-presidential candidate traveled the United States in a 15-car train almost as luxurious as that of a president. He left Sacramento, California on September 15, for a thirty-one-day campaign. His route took him across the Rockies to Utah, south to New Mexico, then through Texas, Oklahoma, Missouri, and Kentucky, north to Ohio and Michigan, east to the New England and Middle Atlantic States, dipped briefly into the South, thence on to the Midwest and back home to California.⁹³ Though he covered a lot of territory, the pace seemed to have no negative effects on his physical stamina. He was relaxed and amiable. The speeches he delivered were devoid

⁹²"Poor Man's Candidate," Time, October 4, 1948, p. 20.

⁹³Ernest K. Lindley, "The Warren Good-Will Tour," Newsweek, October 18, 1948, p. 34.

of substance, but he was engaging, folksy and apparently sincere.

"Little wonder that the Governor's campaign became known as the 'Warren goodwill tour.'"⁹⁴

Just before the President embarked on his Eastern tour, an unfortunate incident occurred which many felt had further diminished his chances for victory in November. According to Time, Truman was groping for some gesture which would improve his waning political fortunes. "I've got to do something dramatic," the President purportedly said, as he paced around the White House.⁹⁵ Thus on October 3, Truman made the decision to send Chief Justice Fred Vinson on a personal mission of peace. He was to meet with Stalin in the hope of achieving a better understanding between the United States and Russia. Secretary of State Marshall strenuously objected to the move, and the plans were ultimately canceled.⁹⁶ Dewey did not use the incident as a campaign issue, but the political debacle was not forgotten by the press. In the New York Times Dewey's cohorts were quoted as saying the Vinson affair was "an error of judgment of such proportions that it could alone be sufficient to swing the election, if the contest were in doubt"...as it is, "the effect... will be to increase the size of victory."⁹⁷

On October 6, Truman left on a three-day whirlwind tour of

⁹⁴Lindley, Ross, p. 210, and "Out-Unified," Time, October 4, 1948, p. 21.

⁹⁵"You Have to Do Something," Time, October 18, 1948, p. 23.

⁹⁶Ibid.

⁹⁷Special to the New York Times, October 11, 1948.

Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Delaware, and upstate New York. It was during this brief campaign trip that the news of the abortive Vinson mission hit the headlines. But the revelation in no way diminished the enthusiasm of the crowds. In fact, they grew larger and more vociferous at every stopping point.⁹⁸

The President's "entertainment value" was foisted off as the excuse for the large turnouts. In Philadelphia the streets of the Republican dominated city were lined with 500,000 cheering spectators. And in the Convention Hall, 14,000 people yelled, screamed, stomped and applauded for so long that Truman lost five minutes of his precious air time. The President brought down the house when he said, "I'd rather have lasting peace in the world than be President. I live for peace, I work for peace, and I pray for peace."⁹⁹

Jersey City was a duplicate of Philadelphia, except that Frank Hague, the Democratic boss, was now "eating crow." The 300-car Presidential motorcade drove down the streets to the accompaniment of 300,000 cheering voices. Time magazine reported the crowds were lined 40 deep. A fireworks display illuminated the "triumphal procession" as it wound its way to the high school auditorium. Incidentally, the display caused the only mishap of the day. Sparks from the Niagara Falls replica ignited some paper decorations which fell into the car bearing Mrs. Truman and Representative Mary Norton. Secret Service agents quickly extinguished the flames. The women

⁹⁸"Will Rogers Truman," Newsweek, October 18, 1948, p. 33.

⁹⁹"Why They Came Out," Time, October 18, 1948, p. 24, and "Will Rogers Truman."

remained smilingly unmoved as the visitation continued without another hitch.¹⁰⁰

Not even rain deterred the crowds from welcoming Truman. In Syracuse, New York, the audience listened enraptured as the President spoke from under a beach umbrella. In Auburn, John Taber's domain, 7,000 people braved a violent cloudburst in order to hear Truman lash out against his foe. "Your congressman used a butcher knife, a saber and a meat ax on every forward-looking appropriation," said Truman. He called the performance "The Taber Dance." The story repeated itself again in Albany as the people stood "gleefully" in an early morning downpour. During the month of October the crowds grew from large to stupendous.

John L. Lewis still bellowed his disapproval of the President, but the words were being drowned out by the tide of Trumanite followers. James C. Petrillo, president of the AFL American Federation of Musicians, "tooted his horn" for the Democratic candidate. When asked why he had joined Truman's bandwagon Petrillo responded, "Because he's a piano player." Reminded that Dewey was a singer, Mr. Petrillo stated that it was irrelevant since "church baritones were outside his jurisdiction."¹⁰¹ The repartee was enjoyed, but no lesson was learned.

Exhilarated, in spite of the continued harassment about the

¹⁰⁰ Dispatches from the New York Times, October 8 and 9, 1948.

¹⁰¹ "For and Against Truman," Newsweek, October 18, 1948, p. 38.

Vinson affair, Truman set off on another tour through the Midwest on October 10. He stumped six states in six days, traveling a total of 3,700 miles. The crowds he drew were fantastic. Charter Heslep calculated 3,387,000 people had seen Truman since Labor Day.¹⁰² But true to form, the press predicted he would lose. "...Few people," printed Time magazine, "gave him even an outside chance of getting the electoral votes necessary for election." It is still a senatorial race.¹⁰³ And Newsweek accused the President of attempting to start a chain reaction. "When a Presidential candidate is up against insuperable odds," stated the magazine, "he must convince himself, so he can convince others, so they can convince still others, that his chances are improving daily."¹⁰⁴ Having satisfactorily ridiculed the President, the article then went on to enumerate Truman's successes in Ohio, Illinois, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Indiana and West Virginia.

On October 11, 100,000 people lined the streets of Akron, Ohio, and later 2,500 jammed into the city's armory to hear the President "take the hide off 'em from top to bottom." In Illinois, the state's electoral votes were supposedly written off as "hopeless;" yet Truman drew a capacity audience at Springfield where the crowd whooped with delight at his "me too" characterization of Dewey. This was on October 12. The following day in Minnesota, St. Paul's civic theatre

¹⁰²"Truman's Acres," Newsweek, October 25, 1948, p. 27.

¹⁰³"The Real Fight," Time, October 25, 1948, p. 21.

¹⁰⁴"Prayer for a Chain Reaction," Newsweek, October 25, 1948, p. 27.

and three adjacent halls were filled with 15,000 persons. Hubert Humphrey grinned his approval as the President delivered his most caustic speech to date. He called Dewey "mealy-mouthed," he said the GOP "either corrupts its liberals or it expels them." The crowd cheered 42 times. Still the press asked, "Did the cheers mean votes?"¹⁰⁵ Truman appeared to relish his position. He had always held Dewey in disdain and had no compunction about driving the shaft deep. "This is no parlor game," said Truman about his hard-fisted campaign.¹⁰⁶

At the famous university city of Madison, Wisconsin, the students demonstrated with all the native gusto of youth--30,000 citizens thronged the streets. At Milwaukee's Borchert ball park, 10,000 turned out. And as the train swung into Indiana on October 15, the numbers became even more astonishing; 25,000 at Kokomo, 20,000 at Hammond, 12,000 at Logansport, 9,000 at Tipton, and 45,000 at the War Memorial in Indianapolis. On October 16, in West Virginia, ex-senator Matthew M. Neely told the President that he hadn't "a doubt in the world" that his state would go Democratic.¹⁰⁷

Truman was pleased with the trip. "He had consistently out-drawn Dewey. In St. Paul, Dewey had an audience of only 7,000 to Truman's 21,000. In Hammond, Indiana, 20,000 turned out to see Truman, only 15,000 for his rival." There were going to be a lot of surprised pollsters on November 3, predicted Truman. "We have

¹⁰⁵"Truman's Acres," p. 27.

¹⁰⁶Abels, p. 236.

¹⁰⁷Dispatch to the New York Times, October 12, 1948, and "Truman's Acres," p. 28.

not had a dud on the trip."¹⁰⁸

This was not braggadocio on Truman's part. He believed his victory was certain and proved it by taking his own poll. On October 13, as the train was traveling from Duluth to St. Paul, Truman gave George Elsey, one of his aides, a state-by-state breakdown of the election. His forecast showed he would win by 340 electoral votes, Dewey would poll 108, Thurmond 42, With 37 doubtful. The President did not reveal his figures to the press because he felt it would give them more ammunition to ridicule him. Thus when the reporters asked him if he thought he would win, the President retorted, "That's your job. That's what you're along for. I am the candidate. The candidate is not going to comment. He's optimistic."¹⁰⁹

Dewey also began another week's tour on October 11, the day after Truman started his Midwest campaign. This time he was going to cover nine states in the East and Midwest. Pittsburg, the steel capital of America, was to be the jumping-off point. Here Dewey delivered his principal labor speech of the campaign.¹¹⁰

According to Time magazine, reporters expected Dewey to discuss possible changes in the Taft-Hartley law because it was still a source of contention with labor. Yet Dewey would make no promises. "Labor has its special problems," he said. "But these problems

¹⁰⁸"If I Hadn't Been There," Time, October 25, 1948, p. 24.

¹⁰⁹Margaret Truman, p. 36, and Ross, p. 221.

¹¹⁰"Victory in the Air," Time, October 18, 1948, p. 24.

have not been solved...by separating labor from the rest of America." In direct reference to the hated Taft-Hartley bill, Dewey, said, "The new law is not perfect. No law, or any other human handiwork, is perfect. It can always be improved and wherever and whenever it needs change it will be changed."¹¹¹ Labor was puzzled.

A perceptible shift in tone was noticed in Dewey's speech, however. It has been conjectured that Truman's growing box-office appeal and his continued jibes against Dewey had finally scored a hit. Piqued by the attacks, Dewey retaliated against the Administration by calling it "weak," "fumbling," "unstable," "irresponsible," "incompetent," and "miserable." Nevertheless, if Dewey was beginning to experience qualms about the outcome on November 2, he concealed it well. Like Truman, he displayed a resolute, victorious countenance. Even when the crowds were small, Dewey and his teammates unhesitatingly explained it away. "...In every campaign Governor Dewey had entered he had lost when the crowds were big and won when the crowds were small," said his confident friends.¹¹² In the meantime, the journalistic world continued to laud his performance.

Time, with its usual penchant for exaggeration, reported that the Dewey staff could hardly see any reason for making the trip. This was written on October 25, just shortly before the election. But, the article continued, since the tour had been scheduled, the Dewey staff felt obliged to go.¹¹³

¹¹¹Ibid.

¹¹²"Confidence on Wheels," Newsweek, October 25, 1948, p. 28.

¹¹³"Don't Worry About Me," Time, October 25, 1948, p. 21.

In Louisville, Kentucky, Dewey endorsed Senator John Sherman Cooper for reelection. "Don't worry about me," said Dewey, emphasizing his concern about the senatorial race. He then made an oblique reference to the Vinson mission.¹¹⁴

The tour was dogged by unpleasanties. In Mt. Vernon, Illinois, four teenage boys--Time called them "hoodlums"--spattered Dewey with tomatoes. At Beaucoup, Illinois, the engineer of the train inadvertently backed into the crowd. No one was injured, but Dewey, caught off-guard, lost his composure and snapped: "That's the first lunatic I've had for an engineer. He probably ought to be shot at sunrise but I guess we can let him off because no one was hurt."¹¹⁵

Surprisingly, the incident caused quite a furor. The engineer remarked at an interview when told of Dewey's reaction: "I think as much of Dewey as I did before and that's not very much."¹¹⁶ Truman made great sport of the slip. "I was highly pleased when I found out...that the train crew on this train are all Democrats," said the President three days after the incident. "We have had wonderful train crews all around the country and they've been just as kind to us as they could possibly be."¹¹⁷ Dewey was not to be forgiven. The Democrats determinedly set out to prove the happening meant Dewey was hostile to the workingman.

¹¹⁴"Confidence on Wheels."

¹¹⁵"Don't Worry About Me,"; "Confidence on Wheels, and Dispatch to the New York Times, October 13, 1948.

¹¹⁶"Confidence on Wheels."

¹¹⁷Dispatch to the New York Times, October 15, 1948.

The "Victory Special" rolled into Oklahoma and Dewey, once again, made his pitch for the Republican Senator from the state. "Don't worry about me, but vote for Ross Rizley for the senate. We need him on our team in Washington." The crowds were not large. At Sapulpa, the candidate and his wife greeted Mrs. Dewey's parents, the Orla T. Hutts. Afterwards, they had dinner at their home.¹¹⁸

The crowds were described as "mildly curious" whenever Dewey's motorcade drove from the train to the hall where he was to speak. The campaign lacked verve. The candidate's speeches were soporific. "As never before," droned Dewey, "we need a rudder to our ship of state and we need a firm hand at the tiller...We know the kind of government we have now. It's tired. It's confused. It scolds and complains...It's coming apart at the seams."¹¹⁹ So was his campaign.

In Missouri he got bursitis, but no electoral votes. In Minnesota he plugged away for Senator Joe Ball who was fighting for his political life against the upstart, Hubert Humphrey, and got splattered by another tomato for his efforts. At St. Paul's Municipal Auditorium, he played host to a half empty hall, presumably because of the rain.¹²⁰ Immediately after St. Paul, Dewey made a benevolent visit to Rensselaer, Indiana, to smooth things over with Charles Halleck.

¹¹⁸"Don't Worry About Me," pp. 21-23; "Confidence on Wheels," and Dispatch to the New York Times, October 13, 1948.

¹¹⁹"Don't Worry About Me."

¹²⁰"Confidence on Wheels," p. 29.

If the tour wasn't triumphant, the welcome Dewey received from his mother made up for everything. "Mater"* met her boy at Jackson, Michigan. "Where's my Tommy?" questioned Mrs. Dewey at the trainside. They embraced and posed for the photographers. "Was there ever such a lucky man as I am?" beamed Dewey. "I have a wonderful mother and a wonderful wife and they are both here with me."¹²¹ Everyone was happy and together they set out for Owosso, Michigan, the candidate's home town. He was popular there. Twenty-thousand people lined the streets of Owosso to cheer their hero. Nine bands blared their welcome, and nine floats, depicting Dewey's life, rolled past in review. This was his greatest success.¹²¹ Contentedly, Dewey entrained for Albany that evening. "There was just one more week to go."¹²³

News reports were sparse about the Wallace and Dixiecrats movements. Both parties had "peaked" months before the final push of the campaign.¹²⁴ While Truman and Dewey were slugging it out, Wallace and Thurmond were losing ground rapidly; their political supporters deserting them. In October, Newsweek reported that a rift had developed between Henry Wallace and his campaign manager, "Beanie" Baldwin. At a \$100-a-plate dinner at the Commodore Hotel in New York, "Beanie" announced the Progressives would endorse the

*"Mater" was the name Dewey used when addressing his mother.

¹²¹"Don't Worry About Me," p. 22.

¹²²"Confidence on Wheels."

¹²³"Don't Worry About Me."

¹²⁴Ross, p. 224.

liberal Democrats, Chester Bowles and Representative Helen Gahagan Douglas of California. Wallace was caught off-guard and reproachfully said, "'We've got to build a party.' And how could you build it with 'guys' like Bowles who 'go in two directions at one time' or even with people like 'Helen Gahagan Dulles (sic)?'"¹²⁵ The next day, Wallace informed the press there had been no misunderstanding between "Beanie" and himself. The newspapers had misinterpreted, he said. But it was obvious to all that the Progressive Party was deteriorating. The situation was equally distressing for Thurmond. His own cousin, 35-year old "Hummon" Talmadge of Georgia, hesitated to join the Dixiecrat ranks.¹²⁶ No one wanted to waste his vote on a loser. Consequently, the last months of the campaign were for Wallace and Thurmond anticlimactic.

"I am very tired," said Henry Wallace upon completion of another sixteen-state speaking tour.¹²⁷ It was the end of October 1948 and he had been campaigning for almost two years. The violence which Wallace met on his Southern tour attested to the underlying truth of hate and prejudice.* Nevertheless, his attempt to gain the confidence of the American people failed. Many reasons have

¹²⁵"The Ross and Beanie," Newsweek, October 4, 1948, p. 23.

¹²⁶"As Georgia Goes," Newsweek, October 11, 1948, p. 29.

¹²⁷"Running Down," Newsweek, November 1, 1948, p. 26.

*In Houston, Texas, a seaman let loose with a barrage of eggs and tomatoes just as Henry Wallace began an address before an unsegregated audience. As the policeman hustled him out he explained apologetically, "I gave the guy three chances and he still couldn't hit Wallace, so I threw him out." ("Fair Try", Newsweek, October 11, 1948, p. 29.)

been given for his rapid decline in popularity. Soviet intransigence, negative press reports, the fiasco of the Philadelphia Convention, lack of labor support, campaigning too early, the takeover of the civil rights issue by the Democratic party and Wallace's own imperfections as a politician were said to have precipitated his fall.

Prospects of success had been so bleak in Wallace's final campaign that a few weeks prior to the election he resorted to radio broadcasts. The Progressive Party was no longer attracting the crowds and it was felt another media should be employed. Wallace had used radio broadcasts in the past, but never with such frequency. However, this last ditch-stand proved as abortive as the other techniques. "The Progressives left no stone unturned. They neglected no possible technique or medium--old or new, tried or unproven--for publicizing their candidates and campaign. From comic books to billboards, they attempted to blanket the nation."¹²⁸ All to no avail.

Karl M. Schmidt, who has done one of the most comprehensive studies on the election results, concerning Wallace, claimed that the downward trend indicated by the pollsters was far from accurate. "From an early high of 11.5 percent in February, the pollsters had charted a decline of popular sentiment to 7.5 percent in April, 6 percent in June and again in August, and to a final 4 percent in the final days of the campaign. The actual Progressive vote

¹²⁸ Karl M. Schmidt, Henry A. Wallace: Quixotic Crusade (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1960), p. 234.

amounted to 2.37 per cent of the total cast."¹²⁹

Governor J. Strom Thurmond may have been a poor choice as a presidential candidate, but he was well suited for the role of comic-relief in the election of 1948. In late July, Thurmond wrote a letter to William H. Hastie, the governor of the Virgin Islands, inviting him to visit South Carolina. "It is my earnest hope that, during my term of office you and your family will honor South Carolina with a visit to Columbia and be our guests at the Mansion." Hastie declined. Later, Thurmond was appalled to discover what he had done. "I didn't know Governor Hastie was a Negro. Of course, it would have been ridiculous to have invited him," said Thurmond ungraciously.¹³⁰

By mid-October, Governor Thurmond's judgment had not improved one bit. He boasted that the Southern states would give him 100 electoral votes, enough to throw the election into the House. Furthermore, he contended most, if not all, the Southern states were behind him.¹³¹ One writer for Newsweek seemed to agree. The Wallace movement was gaining impetus. He noted, Thurmond and Wright were on the ballot in thirteen states and "awaiting a court decision to get on the ballot in Oklahoma."¹³² They were listed

¹²⁹Ibid., p. 234.

¹³⁰"The Pot Boils," Time, October 25, 1948, p. 24, and Ross, p. 232.

¹³¹"The Unsolved South," Newsweek, October 18, 1948, p. 34.

¹³²"Truman's Wrong Guess," Newsweek, October 25, 1948, p. 32.

as the regular Democratic candidates* in Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana and South Carolina. According to Irwin Ross, Truman and Barkley did not appear on the ballot at all in Alabama due to a peculiarity in the law.¹³³ In Tennessee, Arkansas, Georgia, North Carolina, Virginia, Kentucky, Texas and North Dakota, the Thurmond-Wright ticket was listed as States' Rights Democrats. In Florida there was no party designation.¹³⁴

Allegations that Thurmond was a tool of oil and business interests appears to have little validity. His campaign was "as spartan as that of Norman Thomas."¹³⁵ Money was always a problem. Jules Abels claimed that if the oil interests did finance Thurmond, "the low gear in which the States' Rights campaign was conducted (it consisted of about thirty-five major speeches made by him alone) would testify, if anything, to the meager resources" of his backers.¹³⁶ The fact that Thurmond stumped the Southern states with only his wife as his companion would further argue the impecunious position of his party.

Money alone did not cause the decline of the Dixiecrats, however, Thurmond himself stated that an air of futility pervaded the movement. The Dixiecrats were seriously handicapped because they were

*The States' Rights Democrats claimed to be the "true Democratic Party in the Deep South." They frowned on being dubbed the "Dixiecrats," and were "even unhappier about calling Truman followers 'Democrats.'" In retaliation, they coined the word "Trumancrats." ("Dixie," Newsweek, October 18, 1948, p. 34.)

¹³³Ross, p. 230. ¹³⁴"Truman's Wrong Guess," p. 32.

¹³⁵Ross, p. 231. ¹³⁶Abels, p. 215.

a "third party in an essentially two-party system...Party regularity has become engrained in the electorate...voters have been wary of giving all out support to minor parties, regardless of the worth of their objectives, because of a feeling that they would 'lose their votes' through ineffectiveness if cast for third party candidates."¹³⁷

Fear of political reprisals was another reason given for the drop in recruits. In 1928, the South had denied Al Smith its support. It took years for the Democrats to heal the wound, and many cautioned against a repetition.¹³⁸ The adverse publicity of the press, focusing on the white-supremacy issue, also dealt the movement a blow. (It should be pointed out here that Truman was criticized by nearly all the major newspapers in the United States, including the Southern journals.) Lastly, Ader cites the growing liberalism of the South itself as a major factor of disunity. From all evidence, there existed a basic disagreement amongst the Dixiecrats on the race question.¹³⁹

No longer is there anything like unanimity of belief in the maintenance of the status quo as far as the Negro is concerned. Due to the work of progressive politicians, journalists, clergymen, and others, and to a changing southern environment, there has developed a new concept of the place of the Negro in southern society. There is to be found below the Mason-Dixon line today a belief in Negro advancement diametrically opposed to the Dixiecrat position.¹³⁹

Faced with all these negative factors, it should not be

¹³⁷Emile B. Ader, "Why the Dixiecrats Failed," Journal of Politics, August, 1953, p. 359.

¹³⁸Abels, p. 219.

¹³⁹Ader, p. 360

¹⁴⁰Ibid., p. 366.

surprising the southerners failed to flock to Thurmond's banner. The consequences were too great; the hurdles too high. As he concluded his campaign, desertions became more common. Still he had his admirers. "Whatever the fallacies of the reasoning, Thurmond's candidacy is one which he personally and the South can look back on with pride," opined Jules Abels. "He was no extremist."¹⁴¹

Norman Thomas, the perennial presidential candidate of the Socialist party, announced that the 1948 election would be his last race. With his unfailing good humor he said, "I have made almost as many farewell tours for the Presidency as Sarah Bernhardt. But, ladies and gentlemen, this is your last chance."¹⁴² His running mate for the 1948 election was Tucker Smith, a "Quaker, labor organizer, educator, and forty-nine-year-old fighter for free socialism."¹⁴³

Thomas at sixty-three was conducting his sixth and final campaign for the highest office in the land. Like Thurmond, he did not expect to win, but he did hope that the disavowed liberal Democrats would join the Socialists "in the creation of a new mass party similar to Britain's Labor Party."¹⁴⁴ With Truman's victory, of course, the longed-for political realignment was defunct.

¹⁴¹Abels, p. 215.

¹⁴²"The Pot Boils," Time, October 25, 1948, p. 24.

¹⁴³McAlister Coleman, "Why I'll Vote for Thomas," Nation, October 2, 1948, p. 368.

¹⁴⁴Harry Fleischman, Norman Thomas (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1964) p. 234.

Though Thomas polled fewer votes in the 1948 election (140,260) than he ever had before, his popularity was unquestioned. He was a man of high principles and possessed a wit which endeared him to all. Typical of his humor were the following comments made at a luncheon given in his honor. "While I'd rather be right than President, at any time I'm ready to be both." And again, "I'm the only man in America who can stand on a platform. In fact, I'm the only one with a platform to stand on." A newsman present at the occasion remarked, "Why, we'd do anything for that guy! Anything, that is, except give him our votes."¹⁴⁵ Unfortunately for Thomas, the reporter summarized the attitude of the voting public of America.

The countdown had begun. It was the final week of the campaign, and Truman, with a volcanic burst of energy, started his last tour. It surpassed all the others. As November 2 drew nearer, the crowds became almost hysterical. No Rock singer had ever topped Truman's performance.

In Chicago, the motorcade was reduced to a crawl because of the crowds.¹⁴⁶ "The Chicago Democratic organization pulled out every political stop known to man," said Margaret Truman.¹⁴⁷ Fifty-thousand people marched in a parade from the Blackstone Hotel to the Chicago Stadium, with another 500,000 people cheering on the sidelines. The festive mood was climaxed by a gigantic fireworks display which

¹⁴⁵Ibid., p. 237. ¹⁴⁶New York Times, October 26, 1948.

¹⁴⁷Margaret Truman, p. 36.

had "enough flame...to burn the whole town."¹⁴⁸ Truman knew how to enjoy the scenario.

A few days previously in Pittsburg, Truman launched into a comic routine before an audience of 15,000 in the Hunt Armory. It was considered his most spectacular performance of the presidential contest. With all the flourish of a master showman, Truman recited the dialogue between a doctor and his patient. Twirling his imaginary mustache the doctor asks, "You've been bothered much by issues lately?"

The patient replies, "Not bothered, exactly. Of course, we've had quite a few..."

Doctor: "You shouldn't think about issues. What you need is my brand of soothing syrup--I call it 'unity.'"

Patient: "...What is wrong with me?"

Doctor: "I never discuss issues with a patient. But what you need is a major operation--Not very serious. It will just mean taking out the complete works and putting in a Republican administration."

The grandstands hooted their approval and Pennsylvania's Democratic leader, Senator Francis J. Myers said, "When they fill even the doorways, windows and rooftops, it could mean victory."¹⁴⁹

Catholics, Jews and Negroes were of primary concern to Truman in his final week of campaigning. Consequently, in Boston, Truman

¹⁴⁸Dispatch from the New York Times, October 25, 1948; "View from a Polling Booth," Time, November 1, 1948, p. 21, and Margaret Truman, p. 36-37.

¹⁴⁹"Trying Hard," Newsweek, November 1, 1948, p. 19.

referred to Al Smith and the anti-Catholic sentiment aimed at him by the GOP in 1928. In Harlem, the President discussed the civil rights issue. In Madison Square Garden, he made a direct appeal to Jewish voters when he asked for "a strong, prosperous, free and independent Israel."¹⁵⁰ Then lapsing into his now familiar comic routine, Truman told how he had complained to his doctor that he had the feeling somebody was following him. His doctor told him not to worry. "There is one place where that fellow is not going to follow you-- and that's in the White House."¹⁵¹

"Yes, I'm for Harry Truman, the human being. By the same token I'm against Thomas E. Dewey, the mechanical man," proclaimed the throaty Tallulah Bankhead.¹⁵² The blow fell short of its mark. The "mechanical man" wasn't listening. The November 1 issue of Newsweek reported Thomas E. Dewey showed no outward signs that he was even running for the Presidency. "With only a handful of days left before Election Day, he seemed to be more concerned with his duties as governor of New York than with the hurly-burly of the Presidential campaign."¹⁵³ Incredible but true. Not even the taunting jibes of his adversaries could shake him loose from his complacency. He still

¹⁵⁰ Abels, pp. 244-245.

¹⁵¹ Margaret Truman, p. 37.

¹⁵² Anthony Leviero, Special to the New York Times, October 22, 1948.

¹⁵³ "Coasting," Newsweek, November 1, 1948, p. 19.

preached "unity" and sighed for the end of the campaign.¹⁵⁴

Tradition prescribed, as the Time magazine put it, that the Presidential candidates make one final, last-minute appeal and perhaps "a low blow or two, just before the bell."¹⁵⁵ Accordingly, Dewey leaped back into the fray. His pulse had quickened somewhat at the persistent vitriolic attacks from Truman. But his desire to extract a "pound of flesh" was squelched by his advisers. Fearing any rebuttal would be interpreted as weakness, Dewey continued to deliver his "sorry bromides." In Chicago, he cautiously chastised the President for his "mudslinging" campaign, and insisted he would never stoop to such a level. In Boston, Dewey devoted the major portion of his speech to his welfare program. And on October 30, the Governor concluded his campaign at a Madison Square Garden rally.¹⁵⁶

Truman ended his campaign in St. Louis at the Kiel Auditorium. His speech, labeled one of his "greatest," was completely extemporaneous.¹⁵⁷ This was on October 30, the same day Dewey was enjoying his torchlight parade in New York City.¹⁵⁸ Although the campaign had officially concluded, Truman made two more speeches the following day. "The first was a non-political address to members of the Ararat Shrine in Kansas City Auditorium during the afternoon."

¹⁵⁴Ibid.

¹⁵⁵"View from the Polling Booth," Time, November 1, 1948, p. 21.

¹⁵⁶Ibid. and Ross, pp. 235-239.

¹⁵⁷Margaret Truman, p. 38.

¹⁵⁸"View from the Polling Booth."

In the evening, the President spoke to the nation over four radio networks from the living room of his home.¹⁵⁹ Time magazine, predictably, had something to say about Truman's final appeal to the voters. "He had continued to fight right up to the last night. On election eve, while Tom Dewey piously urged everyone to get out and vote, Harry Truman had broken all the rules of proper election-eve conduct by urging the people to get out and vote for Democrats. His last words, which sounded to the experts like a last gasp, were: 'Why, it can't be anything but a victory.'"¹⁶⁰

In his Memoirs, Truman calculated he had traveled a total of 31,700 miles and delivered 356 speeches. "I was used to hard work," the President said, "and my job was cut out for me. I campaigned for thirty-five days and averaged about ten speeches every day. On one single day I delivered sixteen speeches."¹⁶¹ From twelve to fifteen million people had seen Truman. His "one-man crusade" was without parallel. The only thing remaining to be done was to wait for the election returns.

Pearl Harbor Day and Election Day, 1948 possess irrefutable shock value. "Both dates saw the utterly incredible come to pass."¹⁶² On November 2, at 10:00 a.m., Harry S. Truman, Mrs. Truman, and Margaret Truman--who was voting for the first time in a Presidential

¹⁵⁹Truman, Memoirs, II, 220.

¹⁶⁰"Independence Day," Time, November 8, 1948, p. 21

¹⁶¹Truman, Memoirs, II, 219.

¹⁶²Phillips, p. 245.

election--marked their ballots. The cubicles were open affording the cameramen free access to the President. They almost crawled into the balloting box with him. Truman was relaxed, confident and smiling.¹⁶³

"Are you going to sit up for the returns, Mr. President?"

"No," he answered, "I think I'll go to bed. I don't expect final results until tomorrow."¹⁶⁴

He wasn't bluffing. In the afternoon, the President, accompanied by three Secret Servicemen, slipped out the back door of the Rockwood Country Club and drove to a secret hideaway at the Elms Hotel in Excelsior Springs. There he had a Turkish bath, a rubdown, a sandwich and a glass of milk, and then went to bed. It was 7:00 p.m. According to reports, he remained in contact with his aides, who were settled in the penthouse suite of the Muehleback Hotel.¹⁶⁵ In spite of these occasional contacts with his associates, he rested well. As a matter of fact, the evening appeared to be much more exciting for Margaret Truman than it did for her father.

Margaret reported that in Delaware Street the reporters were frantically "storming the house." The long awaited Dewey victory message which was to be delivered at 9:00 p.m. had been postponed. Truman was ahead. As the gap grew wider, the reporters grew noisier.

In New York, the day had begun in much the same way for the Dewey family. The Governor and his wife had a leisurely breakfast

¹⁶³"'Country Boy's' Faith," Time, November 8, 1948, p. 21.

¹⁶⁴Margaret Truman, p. 39.

¹⁶⁵Margaret Truman, p. 40, and "'Country Boy's' Faith."

in their suite at the Roosevelt Hotel. At mid-day, with sirens blowing, Dewey's limousine headed for the polls at a Manhattan public school. Flashbulbs popped as Dewey stepped from his car and strode into the building. Ducking behind the curtain and reemerging rapidly, Dewey quipped, "Well, that's two votes we've got anyway."¹⁶⁶

Upon returning to his apartment, the Governor ate a light lunch, consisting of V-8 juice, salad and milk, and then stretched out on the couch. That evening he dined at the home of his longtime friend, Roger Straus, where he heard the first discouraging returns. Still later, surrounded by his family, Dewey settled down in his own suite to hear the results. The television cameras focused their lenses on Dewey's balcony where he was expected to make a triumphal appearance. All was set. Downstairs in the ballroom, campaign manager Herbert Brownell announced, "It is now apparent that we will wind up by sweeping two-thirds of the states."¹⁶⁷

The hours dragged by. Dewey smoked one Marlboro after another. His son John fell asleep. At midnight, the other brother was sent to bed. People were drifting out of Dewey's headquarters downstairs. One wag asked "if it were true that they were stretching nets outside Dewey's windows."¹⁶⁸ The creeping chill of fear had turned into a frozen mound of panic. The figures on the scoreboard couldn't be true. At 11:30 p.m. Brownell appeared to say Dewey had carried Philadelphia. He hadn't. At 1:45 a.m. Brownell said to the reporters

¹⁶⁶"The Avalanche That Failed," Time, November 8, 1948, p. 22.

¹⁶⁷Ibid. ¹⁶⁸Ibid.

clustered around him, "We know that Governor Dewey will carry New York by 50,000 and will be the next President of the United States." At 5:00 a.m. Dewey was "still confident." At 8:30 a.m. Dewey went to bed.

Back in Independence a different atmosphere reigned. The funereal gloom said to exist in Truman's headquarters vanished--if it had ever been there. At midnight Truman awoke and turned on the radio to listen to H.V. Kaltenborn. He was ahead by 1,200,000 votes. Truman went back to sleep. At 4:00 a.m., Jim Rowley, one of the Secret Servicemen, unable to restrain his excitement, woke the President up. This time Truman was ahead by 2,000,000 votes. Kaltenborn was still broadcasting that he didn't have a chance.¹⁶⁹ At 4:30 Truman's staff called from headquarters at the Muehlebach Hotel. They had been celebrating, said Margaret Truman, "well past the point of sobriety."¹⁷⁰ The President laughingly told his aides he would return at 6:00 a.m.

"Harry Truman's moment of victory found him prepared." He was rested, barbered, and attired in a fresh white shirt and a neat double-breasted blue suit."¹⁷¹ With his staff he waited on the eleventh floor penthouse of the Muehlebach. The verdict reached him when a sudden shout vibrated through his room. Dewey had conceded.¹⁷² In Independence, the town went wild. Whistles, sirens, automobile

¹⁶⁹ Truman, Memoirs, II, 220-221. ¹⁷⁰ Margaret Truman, p. 41.

¹⁷¹ "County Boy's' Faith." ¹⁷² Ibid.

horns, air-raid alarms and the cheers of thousands filled the air. Truman, the only man who knew he would win, humbly thanked the crowd. "I thank you very much indeed for this celebration, which is not for me. It is for the whole country. It is for the whole world."¹⁷³ It was 10:14 Missouri time.

In New York, Dewey had been awakened by Herbert Brownell who told him the bitter news. In his own hand, Dewey penned the telegram of congratulations to Truman. It read: "My heartiest congratulations to you on your election and every good wish for a successful administration. I urge all Americans to unite behind you in support of every effort to keep our nation strong and free and establish peace in the world."¹⁷⁴

Dewey held a press conference at 1:00 p.m. When queried by one reporter as to what went wrong, Dewey replied, "I was just as surprised as you are..." He ended the interview by saying, "It has been grand fun, boys and girls. I enjoyed it immensely."¹⁷⁵ The press termed it "his finest hour."

The contrast in the Wallace camp was startling. The dignity and graciousness displayed by Dewey was sadly lacking in the Progressive party candidate. Time magazine described Wallace as "an angry, spiteful Gideon" on election night. "When the networks gave him time for a three-minute talk...Wallace cried: 'The cup of iniquity of both the old parties will overflow and one or the other of

¹⁷³Margaret Truman, p. 42.

¹⁷⁴Ross, p. 243, and "The Avalanche That Failed," p. 23.

¹⁷⁵Ross, p. 243.

the old parties will disappear.' He exhorted his workers: 'This crusade is going ahead with renewed vigor.'"176 But it did not go ahead with renewed vigor. The death knell had sounded. The defeat at the polls had been too overwhelming. There was left only the formal burial of the party.

The image of Wallace as an embittered, cynical loser is borne out by his friends as well as by his detractors. Curtis MacDougall, a staunch advocate of his policies, recounts the closing hours of the election. Before Wallace left his headquarters at 2:00 a.m., he had given his okay to a telegram to be sent to Harry S. Truman. Apparently, when it was shown to Clark Foreman for approval he objected to it because there had not been any word of congratulations in the message. When Foreman attempted to change the wording in the interest of good sportsmanship Wallace retorted, "Under no circumstances will I congratulate that son of a bitch."177

Some years later, Merle Miller, who lived near Wallace's farm in South Salem, New York, and who held several conversations with him remarked, "I have never been more disappointed in a public figure. He was a muddled, totally irrational man, almost incapable of uttering a coherent sentence. He was also the bitterest man I have ever encountered."178 Presumably, the campaign had left the indelible mark of Cain on Henry Agard Wallace, one which was never to

176"Among the Ruins," Time, November 15, 1948, p. 27.

177Curtis MacDougall, Gideon's Army, III, 882.

178Merle Miller, p. 251.

be erased.

In the South, J. Strom Thurmond wired Truman, "You are entitled to the united support of a united people..." Other messages from the South bombarded the White House asking if they could shift their votes to the Truman column. Apparently, the Dixiecrats did not wish to go down in history as having defected from the Democratic ranks.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁹"Among the Ruins."

CHAPTER VIII

LOOKING BACK

"It seems incredible," marveled Robert Bendiner, "that millions of us should have taken it for granted that while our-fellow-Americans liked Harry Truman, even if they gasped at his blunders, they would grudgingly troop to the polls and vote for Thomas E. Dewey, whom they neither liked nor trusted..."¹ In Europe, the people had waited anxiously for the outcome. When Truman won they sighed, "This means peace."² Others, angry and unrepentant, refused to accept the Truman victory. George Sokolsky snarled, "Truman gave out during the campaign, becoming boisterous and vulgar. Some say that he made votes for himself that way. If true, that is a reflection on the intelligence of the American people."³ Presuming Sokolsky was correct, the following chart divides the intelligent from the unintelligent American. Here are the final figures of the election:*

¹Robert Bendiner, "Two and Two Make Four," Nation, November, 13, 1948, p. 540.

²J. Alvarez del Vayo, "A Victory for Peace," Nation, November 13, 1948, p. 538.

³"What Happened," Time, November 13, 1948, p. 66.

*These figures fail to agree with Harry Truman's own tally in his Memoirs.

TABLE III

CANDIDATE	POPULAR VOTE	ELECTORAL VOTE	STATES
Truman	24,045,052	304	28
Dewey	21,896,927	189	16
Wallace	1,137,957	---	--
Thurmond	1,168,687	38	4

The four southern states which Truman lost were: South Carolina, Mississippi, Alabama and Louisiana. Wallace snatched New York from him. The Progressive party candidate drew a half million votes from the American Labor Party, otherwise Dewey would have lost his own state to Truman. The entire western bloc went to the President, except for Oregon. Ironically, however, Dewey captured a large segment of Democratic territory in the Northeast--from Maryland through Maine (excluding Massachusetts and Rhode Island)--and Truman captured many traditionally Republican farm states. The pivotal states were considered Ohio and California. Without these, Truman claimed he "would have been assured of only 254 electoral votes, twelve less than the required 266."⁴ He achieved something no President had ever done before. Truman won the election without New York and the Solid South. The maddening question which remained was, how?

James B. Reston of the New York Times declared: "Before we in the newspaper business spend all our time and energy analyzing Governor Dewey's failure in the election, maybe we ought to try to analyze our own failure. For that failure is almost as spectacular as the President's victory, and the quicker we admit it the better off

⁴Harry S. Truman, Memoirs, II, p. 221.

we'll be."⁵ Time listed an "anthology" of errors which the press perpetuated throughout the campaign. The magazine gave these following examples: "Few voters believed that there would be any contest...When Harry Truman damned the 80th Congress and Taft-Hartley law, nobody seemed really to care or listen...We're going to miss lil' ole Harry...The course of events cannot be halted for three months until Mr. Dewey is inaugurated."⁶ The list continued for nearly two columns. Never had the press been so wrong, and as they themselves admitted, it could not be laughed off. The newspapers had been four to one in favor of Dewey, and in terms of circulation the ratio in October was eight to one, again favoring Dewey.⁷ But, it was not because 65 per cent of the press had backed the Republican candidate that they were culpable. This was their privilege. The fault was that the press had failed to report accurately. Time magazine, one of the worst offenders, had this to say about it. "The press was morally guilty on several counts. It was guilty of pride: it had assumed that it knew all the important facts--without sufficiently checking them. It was guilty of laziness and wishful thinking: it had failed to do its own doorbell-ringing and bush-beating; it had delegated its journalist's job to the pollsters."⁸

⁵James E. Pollard, The Presidents and the Press (Washington: Public Affairs Press, 1964), p. 35.

⁶"Study of Failure," Time, November 15, 1948, p. 63.

⁷Pollard, p. 35.

⁸"What Happened," p. 64.

James Reston gave three primary reasons for the election results. He stated the press had failed to take into consideration that no previously defeated presidential candidate had ever been elected. He said employment and national income were high, and that the political influence of the Roosevelt era had been almost totally ignored.⁹

Reston's second assertion that the Americans were enjoying prosperity, therefore unwilling to change parties, seems feasible. Samuel Lubell, in a postelection survey done for the Saturday Evening Post, uncovered some interesting facts. When he asked the people why they had voted for Truman, Lubell received the following responses. "The Democrats are the labor party. We workers are Democrats." In a well-to-do suburb in Arlington one man said, "I own a nice home, have a new car and am much better off than my parents were. I've been a Democrat all my life. Why should I change?"¹⁰ Even more surprising was the response from a Republican farmer. "I talked about voting for Dewey all summer," he said, "but when voting time came, I just couldn't do it. I remembered the depression and all the good things that have come to me under the Democrats...I had exactly two dollars and a quarter in my pocket then. Now I have a farm, all paid for, a new car, a herd of cows, money in the bank. That's what the Government did for me."¹¹ Such testimonials were

⁹Pollard, p. 36.

¹⁰"Who Really Elected Truman?" Saturday Evening Post, January 22, 1949, p. 17.

¹¹Ibid., p. 56.

not infrequent. The common man had prospered under the Democratic regime.

Samuel Lubell refers to the emergence of the Roosevelt era as the "Third American Revolution."¹² The toppling of the Republican party was more than just a desire for change, it presaged a new pattern of political life. "In Roosevelt, the 'common people' saw their benefactor." Truman was the natural heir, and used his advantage well. "He had fighting, folksy tones to appeal to the Roosevelt elements--labor, unorganized as well as organized; the foreign-born and their first and second generation offspring; also Negroes and Catholics."¹³

The post mortems continued. George Gallup, Elmo Roper, Archibald Crossley and all the other pollsters were worried. They had reason to be. The Peoria Journal, the Nashville Tennessean, the St. Louis Globe Democrat and others had canceled their contracts with Gallup. And what had happened to one could happen to another. The entire business of polling was at stake. What went wrong? Had there been indications which the pollsters failed to read? According to Edward Whittlesey and William McPhee, who ran a statewide poll in Colorado, the figures they compiled in June showed Truman would win the state. "But they got worried when their results dis-

¹²Samuel Lubell, The Future of American Politics (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1952), p. 3.

¹³"Who Really Elected Truman?", p. 16.

agreed with Gallup's, so they juggled them for publication."¹⁴

Perhaps. But the unpublished figures of two men does not explain the unreliability of the major polling firms.

In an election study taken at Elmira, New York, these facts were discovered. Truman did not gain the majority of votes in the last days of the campaign. This was a much publicized rationalization of the Republicans who condemned Dewey for taking it easy. The "undecided" voter constituted an important source of votes for Truman which the pollsters should have discovered. The failure on the part of Gallup and others, to follow up on their initial question of why they were undecided, caused the mistake. For instance, had they asked "Well, even though you don't know for sure how you will vote, which candidate are you leaning toward now--Dewey, Truman, or Wallace?" Invariably, concluded the study, the "undecided" voter was pro-Truman.¹⁵ The other findings were equally enlightening. The study showed Truman gained votes directly from Dewey. And finally, it proved that Truman's victory was not attributable to a low Republican turnout contrary to popular belief. Governor Thomas E. Dewey himself blamed the election results on this factor. "I was quite surprised by the very low vote," he said. "It looks as though two or three million Republicans stayed home, out of over-

¹⁴"The Great Fiasco," Time, November 15, 1948, p. 66.

¹⁵Helen Dinerman, "1948 Votes in the Making," Public Opinion Quarterly, Winter, 1948, p. 589.

confidence. That one fact stands out from the returns so far."¹⁷

The major issues of price control and control of unions stimulated the greatest response from the people polled in Elmira.¹⁸ But there is ample evidence that these subjects were important to all Americans. Labor had played a vital role in winning votes for Truman. The politicians worked quietly and deliberately. "In 1944 we made a lotta noise. In '48 we worked," said one determined union member. The AFL and CIO worked side-by-side to defeat the framers of the Taft-Hartley law. They combed registration lists, rang doorbells, distributed leaflets, and on Election Day provided baby-sitters and free taxi service.¹⁹

The explanations for the "Truman miracle" are almost endless. The movement of the German-American voters to the Democratic fold was considered another major element in the victory. "Efforts to sell Dewey as a farmer stirred suspicion. 'What was Dewey's farm program?' demanded one farmer. 'We knew where Truman stood.'"²⁰

Interestingly enough, the civil rights issue rallied not only the Negro to the Democratic ranks, but others as well. All those "who, as children and grandchildren of immigrants, shared memories of racial and religious discrimination." The intensity of identifi-

¹⁷"Explanations," Time, November 15, 1948, p. 24.

¹⁸Dinerman, p. 593.

¹⁹"Crossfire," Time, November 15, 1948, p. 24.

²⁰"Who Really Elected Truman?", p. 54.

cation was expressed dramatically by an Italo-American veteran. He said, "The Dixiecrats made me think of Al Smith."²¹

Governor Dewey himself has been blamed for the GOP defeat. Congressman Fred Hartley, Jr. said, "Mr. Dewey started acting like the President of the United States too soon." And Speaker Joe Martin growled, "We offered too many Brahmins: too many plutocrats..."²² Irwin Ross suggests, "A campaign less devoted to high-minded platitudes...might have made enough of a difference to have swung the three states which in the end proved decisive."²³ Yet, given the political attitudes of America in 1948, the only way Dewey could have won would have been to adopt Truman's platform. Correction. Croucho Marx offered a second solution for victory. "The only way a Republican will get into the White House," quipped the comedian, "is to marry Margaret Truman."²⁴

²¹Ibid., p. 56.

²²"Explanations," p. 25.

²³Irwin Ross, The Loneliest Campaign. (New York: New American Library, 1968), p. 261.

²⁴Ibid., p. 270.

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